Rawl. 194.

THE SAINTS READINESS FOR THEIR LORD'S COMING:

A FUNERAL SERMON

Preached upon the

DEATH

OF

That Faithful and Laborious Servant of CHRIST,

Mr. JOHN OAKES,

Dec. 30. 1688.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

By *SAMUEL SLATER* Minister of the Gospel.

Matth. 10. 25.

While they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready, went in with him to the Marriage, and the door was shut.

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THE SAINTS READINESS FOR THE LORDS COMING

A FUNERAL SERMON

To my loving Friend

Mrs. *MARY OAKES*,

The Afflicted and Sorrowful Widdow of

Mr. *JOHN OAKES.*

Dear Siſter,

THE Hand of the Lord hath touched you, and that to the quick, ſtriking you in the Maſter-vein, the moſt intimate Companion and Comfort you had on this ſide of himſelf. Your exquiſite ſenſe hereof hath been abundantly evidenced by the Tears you have ſhed, and the Groans you have uttered; though to the glory of Supporting Grace, I cannot but ſay, as it is in Job 23. 2. *Your ſtroak is heavier than your groaning; God having, ſo far as my Obſervation reached, taught you, with a due Silence and Submiſſion, to bear it in a Child-like gracious manner.*

My deſign in theſe lines, which muſt be few, is not to inflame the Wound, which the Divine Hand hath made in your Spirit; but to pour Oil into it, in order to healing. True it is, your Loſs muſt neceſſa-

rily be counted and called Great. Mine is so, who am deprived of an old Acquaintance, a dear Friend, a faithful Brother; his Peoples is so, who have lost a pious and prudent Pastor, a diligent industrious Labourer, who watched for the life and good of their Souls. But what then is yours! who are deprived of an affectionate and tender Husband, who knew how cordially to sympathize with you in your infirmities and sorrows, and chearfully to reach out to you an helping hand in every one of your needs.

Yet I doubt not but that you have in some good measure learned that great and excellent Lesson, which Paul, through the blessed teaching of Christ, was so good at, viz. of Contentment in every state in which you are, (having by Providence been carried through, and born up in variety,) and particularly in this your solitary and lonely Condition, while you remember and seriously consider, who it is that hath brought you into it, namely, that God who hath power and soveregn right to dispose of us and ours as he pleaseth, without being obliged to give any account of his matters; and who hath such infinite Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledg, that he never miscarried in one Action, or Circumstance of Action, but always doth all well; and by all, yea by this, I doubt not, will do you good. A sense of the Loss God both allows and requires, who would not have his Children stupid; though he is able to raise up, even of Stones, Children unto Abraham; yet he would not have any of Abraham's Children degenerate into Stones. A

Sorrow

Sorrow too, in ſuch caſes as this, is no offence to his pure Eyes; Jeſus, who was a Lamb without ſpot, and knew no ſin, wept when he came to the Grave of his dead Friend Lazarus; *only our Sorrow muſt be well regulated, and kept within thoſe juſt bounds, as to length and meaſure, that right Reaſon and Religion are to ſet it. But as, I hope, there are in you no angry Diſcontent, nor peeviſh Quarrellings, which are ſinful and God provoking; ſo let there be no unbelieving Succumbings and Dejections of Spirit; let there be no Contendings on one hand, and not any Faintings on the other; for though you have loſt your Huſband, yet you have not loſt your God; and, which is more, you never ſhall:* Pſal. 73. 26. My fleſh and my heart faileth, but God is the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever. *As he ever lives, ſo he ever lives to be yours: Your Marriage-bond hath already been, and that of all others ſhall be diſſolved; be they never ſo young, and never ſo ſtrong, and let them love never ſo dearly, Death will part them; but that Covenant-bond, in which God and you, and all his faithful ones, ſtand mutually obliged, knoweth no ſuch thing as a Diſſolution; for it is everlaſting, ordered in all things, and ſure.*

The Lord was pleaſed to take him off with a ſtroke; my meaning is, the Providence was ſudden; yet, as I am very apt to think, not altogether ſo to you a ſerious and thinking Chriſtian, much in converſe with dark and melancholy Objects; and

who full well knew, that he dwelt in a Tabernacle of Clay, and had his Breath in his Noſtrils; and that many Changes are Surprizes, and accordingly did endeavour to prepare. Both the time and manner of his Departure were determin'd and appointed by an eternal and unalterable Decree; which was the product of the counſel of the Divine Will, and upon that ſcore it was abſolutely neceſſary for him then to die, and ſo to die; and ſo to enter into his reſt, and the joy and glory of his Lord. It was indeed very ſtartling unto his Relations, Friends and Auditors; but by how much the more it was ſo, by ſo much the more awakening it was; and, Oh that it may be eventually found by ſo much the more profitable. God was at that time pleaſed both to ſilence his Miniſter, and ſpeak himſelf with a Voice loud enough to reach not only every one that was preſent, but all thoſe that either do or ſhall hear of his Death. And Oh! that you and I, and thouſands more, might ſo hear and learn, as thereupon to turn good Accomptants, numbring our days aright, and Friends to our ſelves, in applying our hearts with ſpeed to true Wiſdom.

But, my dear Friend, I would not have you ſpend too much time in poring upon your Loſs, and ſo yet more imbitter your Spirit, by feeding upon nothing elſe ſave Wormwood and Gall. There is another and better courſe for you to ſteer, and that is to fetch Meat out of the Eater. Labour to improve the Providence, and get all the good by

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it that you can. You may think of your having loſt a good Huſband, a ſweet Companion, a meet Help; but withal, think and ſtudy how you may turn this Loſs into Gain; and that you may do, by getting your heart more weaned from things below, the uncertainty and fading dying nature of which you have experienced. You have loſt an Huſband, therefore do not ſet your Affections upon this nor that, upon nothing below God; upon him let your Eye be, and from him your Expectation; in him your ſupream Delight, and towards him the moſt lively and vigorous Motions of your Soul; and never forget to haſten your preparation for your own Diſſolution, but diligently practiſe the Advice I have given in the Sermon this is annext to. You muſt e're long follow your deceaſed Huſband, and I do not at all queſtion but you will ſafely come to him, and that will be the ſweeteſt meeting you ever had; only loſe no time, carefully mind your journey, gird up the loyns of your mind, and make all the ſpeed you can: While many are ſleeping over that Damnation which ſleepeth not, and others are galloping in full ſpeed to Hell, as if they thought they could not get thither ſoon enough, how ſweet and excellent a thing is it to ſee Chriſtians progreſſive in Knowledg, Faith and Holineſs, and ripening a-main for Glory, looking white unto the Harveſt!

While you are here, live as much as ever you can to *God, do not entertain one hard thought of him,*

him, make not the leaſt abatement in your affections to him; but be ſure to make Him and his Honour the great deſign, the higheſt ultimate end of your Life and all your Actions: And live likewiſe as much as ever you can with *God, chooſing him for your ableſt Counſellor, your moſt effectual Comforter, your moſt intimate boſom Friend, and your conſtant Companion; get every day into a cloſer and cloſer Communion with him; be continually growing up in that. Truly the leaſt diſtance from God, is too much; the Men of the World do not know what they loſe, by being altogether without him; and many gracious Souls conſider not what they ſuffer, by being ſuch Strangers to him as they are. He hath ſuch Beams as will ſcatter all your Darkneſs, ſuch Cordials as will relieve in all your Faintings, ſuch Comforts as will abundantly delight your Soul in the multitude of your Thoughts within you, when they are moſt diſquieting, boiſterous and turbulent. His Preſence and Smiles will ſingly be enough, without calling in Creatures concurrence, to make you laugh alone, yea, in this your ſtate of Widdowhood; having them, you ſhall ſee cauſe to ſay, I am not alone, for the Father is with me.*

It is my Deſire, and earneſt Prayer, That God would pleaſe to enlighten your darkneſs, and to manifeſt himſelf to you at a greater rate than ever he did yet; that he would be graciouſly pleaſed to ſtand in the breach which himſelf hath made; that he would

would powerfully ſupport you under all your bodily Infirmities and Soul-diſtreſſes; that he would cauſe all Grace to abound to you, and in you, and by his Spirit ſtrengthen you with all might in the inward Man; that he would ſhed his Love abroad in your Heart, which is better and more reviving than Wine: In a word, That he would ſweeten and ſanctifie all your Afflictions, aſſiſt you in all your Duties, and make the greateſt Difficulties eaſie to you. It will be very pleaſant to me, to ſee all your Children your Comforts; the good Lord make them ſo, by planting his Grace in their Hearts, and leading them on and on in the Way Everlaſting, the midſt of the Paths of Judgment; for I am ſure you can here have no greater Joy, than to ſee them brought forth to God, and walking in the Truth. O, that your Son may be found (as from what his Father told me I hope he is) a Son of God! and your Daughters the Daughters of Abraham *! And I do adviſe them, as ever they would have a Bleſſing from Heaven upon them, and deſire the attainment of Happineſs here and hereafter, that they make it their conſtant ſtudy and care to pleaſe and honour God, and likewiſe to expreſs all tenderneſs and dutiful reſpect to you.*

But I have drawn out this Epiſtle to too great a length. The Father of Mercies, who hath at his own diſpoſe the Earth and the fulneſs thereof, with Heaven and all the Glory thereof, command his beſt Bleſſings upon you and yours, and crown

you

you with loving Kindneſs and tender Mercies, binding you all up in the bundle of the Life of the Lamb. May he raiſe you in all your Sinkings, revive you in all your Faintings, warm you when cold at Heart, ſupply you in all Wants, fill you with Grace, fit you for Glory, and grant you to behold his Face in Righteouſneſs, and to be eternally ſatisfied with his Love and Likeneſs. So praying, I reſt,

Your loving ſympathizing

Jan. 28. 168$\frac{8}{9}$. Friend and Brother,

SAMUEL SLATER.

A

FUNERAL SERMON.

MAT. XXIV. 44.

— Be ye alſo ready.

THE Fall of *Adam* was fatal, not only to himſelf but all his Poſterity, who were in him as a root, and repreſented by him as a common Perſon; ever ſince both himſelf and all Mankind have been diſorder'd throughout: So that thô Man was, when he came out of the hand of his great and glorious Creator, little lower than the Angels, yet now he is ſunk into ſo deep a degeneracy, that he is little better than the Beaſts that periſh; Oh that we would all conſider it with ſorrow and bluſhing! That divine and glorious Image which was the beauty of the Soul is defac'd, the Primitive rectitude of Nature is loſt, Reaſon it ſelf is miſerably impair'd and weakened. Holy *Agur* did with a judicious eye and curious Pencil draw to the life both his own Picture, and that of every Man in his lapſed and corrupt State, when he ſaid, *Prov.* 30. 2. *Surely I*

am more bruitiſh than Man, and have not the underſtanding of Man: Stupidior ſum quam viro convenit, quàm ut vir cenſeri debeam: I am more ſtupid than it becomes a Man to be, more ſtupid than that any ſhould count me a Man, or treat me as ſuch: I am ſunk into the fleſh, grown carnal and ſold under ſin, having in me more of the Bruit than the Man. Two things are too great and undeniable demonſtrations hereof.

Firſt, Man's ſloth and dulneſs, who wretchedly lyes pleaſing himſelf in the lap of a ſordid Luſt, and in the unprofitable embraces of a lying Vanity, and in the profound ſleep of an ungrounded ſecurity.

Secondly, This is no leſs evident from his fooliſh and irrational unconcernedneſs about thoſe matters which are in themſelves of moſt ineſtimable worth and value, and unto him of the moſt near and high importance; blowing up of bubbles in the air, and purſuing feathers 'till he ſweat, but trifling about things of greateſt moment.

Our dear and ever bleſſed Lord Jeſus, who is the beſt Friend that ever the Children of Men had, who came from Heaven to Earth on purpoſe to do us a kindneſs; who ſhed his moſt precious Blood, and laid down his Life as the Price of our Redemption from Sin and Miſery. I ſay, He doth in this Chapter, as a great, skilful, and moſt gracious Phyſician, apply himſelf to the curing of this ſore and Death-threatning Diſeaſe,

Diſeaſe, and to that end ſounds a Trumpet in the Ears of Lethargick ſinners, that he might awaken them to the due uſe of their Reaſon, and the great work of ſerious Conſideration: He entertains them with a warm diſcourſe concerning his Coming again, when he will Judge the World in Righteouſneſs. He will come (as he here tells them, and in them us, and all) in the Clouds of Heaven, with Power, Authority, and great Glory. His Angels alſo ſhall be ſent to gather his Elect from one end of Heaven to the other; but of the day and hour when this ſhall be, knoweth no Man, no not the Angels themſelves, but the Father only, who hath been pleaſed in his infinite Wiſdom to conceal it in his own breaſt, and to lock it up among his treaſures: This was the Doctrine our Lord here Preached; a Doctrine which when delivered by *Paul* a Priſoner, made *Felix* tremble, though at that time a Governour, and ſitting Judge upon the Bench. Upon this Doctrine our Saviour raiſed two Exhortations.

1. The one is to Watchfulneſs, *Verſe* 42. γρηγορεῖτε οὖν. *Watch therefore:* Do not allow and abide in a dull heavy frame of Soul; do not ſleep away your ſhort day and golden Opportunities; ſee to it that you be not ſurpriz'd, but be you always watching, and working, and looking for your Lord's coming to you and ſending for you, for his approach, and for your departure.

2. The other Exhortation is to a ſerious,

timely, and thorough Preparation, that you might be found ſo as you would be, ſo as will make for your Intereſt, that you may be found to acceptance; this you have in the words of the Text, γίνεσθε ἕτοιμοι. *Be ye alſo ready.* That Doctrine which lieth fair before us, and which I ſhall preſent you with, and diſcourſe upon as very proper and pertinent to the late ſtartling Providence, and to this preſent Occaſion, and very much your Duty and for your Intereſt, will be this,

Doct. *It is the great Duty of Chriſtians, and ſhould be attended and followed as a main and principal part of their work, to get themſelves ready for their Lords coming, that when he ſhall appear in a glorious ſtate, they may be found in a prepared ſtate.*

There are a great many things to which we ſhould be very backward, ſuch are all the works of the Fleſh. The Corruption that is in us is forward to break out; a Fountain is not more ready to ſend forth ſtreams, nor a noyſome Dunghil more ready to ſend forth an unſavoury ſcent, nor a Field more ready to bring forth weeds; and the Devil is ready to tempt us to it, being abundantly furniſhed for ſuch a purpoſe; he hath his wiles and methods, and temptations at hand to draw us from God and every thing which is good, and to allure us unto that which is evil. But to every thing

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of that Nature we ſhould be backward, as *Joſeph* was when tempted to bodily Uncleanneſs, and the *three Children* when tempted to ſpiritual Uncleanneſs, that of Idolatry: In ſuch Caſes our Soals ſhould be as green Wood or wet Tinder to the ſpark, that will not eaſily take fire. So it was with the eminent Saint and Apoſtle *Paul*; with what Fury did *Satan* fall upon him, and how unmercifully did his Meſſenger buffet him; he laboured with might and main to beat and box him to the work of ſin, but he could not prevail: As Flattery would not do with Chaſt *Joſeph*, ſo neither would Violence with couragious and reſolved *Paul*; the good Man rather choſe to bear all the *Devil*'s blows, than ſet his hand to any of his work, or do the leaſt ſtroak at it.

But now there are other things which we ſhould be ready for, and have our Hearts working moſt freely and chearfully toward upon the firſt motion, and thoſe are ſuch things as we can in Judgment call our Duties; as briefly to inſtance in a few:

The work and buſineſs of that Place or Calling in which *Divine* Providence hath ſet us; thus the forenamed Apoſtle could ſay, *Rom.* 1.15. *So much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Goſpel to you that are at* Rome *alſo:* That was the work of his Office, to that he was obliged by the Call and Command of God, and for that he was ready, let God ſend him whither he pleaſed, he would go even to *Rome*; where there was a con-

fluence of learned Men from all Nations, where that Monſter *Nero* ſate in the Throne, and where he had reaſon to expect meeting with greateſt oppoſition and danger: When he was firſt called to the Work he was found to be ſo, *Gal.* 1. 15, 16. *When it pleaſed God to call me by his grace, and to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles, immediately I conferred not with fleſh and blood:* He never ſtood diſputing the point, nor did he hold any long debate; he called not Fleſh to council, nor adviſed with carnal eaſe, or carnal intereſt, or carnal Friends and Relations; he never asked them whether God was to be obeyed or no, and whether Chriſt was to be embraced and Preached or no, and whether for the ſake of Chriſt and the Goſpel he ſhould provoke againſt himſelf a waſpiſh and teachy World, and raiſe up a multitude of ſtorms, and run into eminent and innumerable dangers; but he was ready upon the Call, the firſt word did it with him, and ſo it ſhould with every one of us.

Again, We ſhould be ready for Holy Ordinances, approaches to God and attendances upon him; ready to Hear, having the inward ear of the Heart opened, as well as the outward ears of the Head; ready to Pray and wreſtle with God, and pour out our Souls before him; ready to receive the Sacrament, having Appetites up, Hearts in tune, and Graces vigorouſly active; in Diſcourſes of God and

and the things of God our Tongues ſhould be as the Pen of a ready Writer. We ſhould get our Hearts prepared and ſweetly fitted for every thing of this Nature that we turn our hand to do; ſo graciouſly ſoftned as to be ready for the receiving of all thoſe holy and bleſſed Impreſſions that the divine Spirit would make upon them, and ſo docil as to be ready to take out all thoſe excellent Leſſons which he ſhall pleaſe to teach us: We ſhould be ready to give an account or reaſon of the Faith and Hope that is in us to any one that ſhall ask us.

Further, We ſhould be ready to ſuffer when God calls us to it, and to take up the Croſs for the ſake of Chriſt, when he thinks good to lay it in our way, carrying our Eſtates, worldly Comforts, Liberties and Lives in our hands, as Perſons willing to reſign them and lay them at the feet of Chriſt's Intereſt, which we ought to preferr before our chiefeſt Joy: Arrived at this lofty pitch of Self-denyal, poor *Peter* thought himſelf, when he confidently ſaid unto our Saviour, *Luk.* 22. 33. *Lord, I am ready to go with thee both into priſon and to death:* It is true, as one ſaith, he was not *ſatis armatus*, not ſufficiently armed at that time, not ſtrong enough to grapple with a Temptation, but ſhamefully foiled by it, and grievouſly wounded; but notwithſtanding that, the good Man was *bene animatus*, well minded, his Heart ſtood for it, his Will was good and preſent, though when it came to the puſh, how to perform at that time

he knew not: Chriſt was ſo precious to him, and his Heart was ſo ſet upon him, that he thought neither the badneſs of the way, nor the greatneſs of ſufferings ſhould be able to part them.

But we come now to that which is to be the ſubject of our preſent Diſcourſe, *viz.* That we ſhould be ready for our Lord's coming, both for his coming to us, and for our going to him. Our *Saviour* in the Verſe immediately preceeding our Text, had told his Diſciples, *If the good man of the houſe had known in what watch the thief would have come, he would have watched, and would not have ſuffered his houſe to be broken up.* The Men of this World will, and every one of you, that have in you the reaſon of a Man, will be thoughtful and take care about your temporal and worldly Intereſt, you will endeavour to ſecure your preſent Comforts and Enjoyments; and when you do apprehend any danger that faceth and threatens you, you will do all that is in your power to prevent it: And becauſe the good Man of the houſe doth not know the preciſe hour in which the Thief will come, thô he doth not continually wake and watch, yet ſo far as he can he will get all things into a readineſs, that ſo he may be in a capacity of oppoſing his Enemy, and of defending himſelf and his houſe. Now from hence Chriſt argueth the buſineſs with us, as one that would not have the Children of this World wiſer in their generation, and about their low and lit-

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tle concerns, than the Children of light are in and about theirs, which are of unſpeakably greater moment. Let not them take more care for periſhing Bodies and dying Enjoyments, than you do for your precious immortal Souls, and for that Life and Happineſs which will run parallel with the line of Eternity. There is a time when your Lord will come, but the time of his coming you do not know: Several Scriptures tell us, he will come as a Thief in the night; ſo *Paul* tells us, 1 *Theſ.* 5. 2. Where he ſpeaks of it as a thing abundantly known, *Your ſelves know perfectly that the day of the Lord ſo cometh as a thief in the night:* And the Apoſtle *Peter* tells us the ſame, 2 *Pet.* 3. 10. *The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night:* And our *Lord Jeſus* himſelf ſpeaks the ſame Language, *Rev.* 16. 15. *Behold I come as a thief, bleſſed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, leſt he walk naked, and they ſee his ſhame.* When it is ſaid, He will come as a thief, the meaning is, that he will come on a ſudden, in an unexpected, unthought of time; *Hominibus nec præſcientibus, nec timentibus*; In a time that Men do not aforehand know of, a time in which they are ſecure and fear nothing; for, ſaith he in this Chapter, *As in the dayes that were before the flood,* Men gave over themſelves to a ſenſual, worldly and voluptuous Life, *they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entred into the ark, and until the flood came and took them away:*

Now

Now as it was with that old World, ſo, juſt ſo it will be with this; *So*, ſaith Chriſt, *ſhall the Coming of the Son of Man be.* Such will be the manners of men, ſuch their Life, ſuch their folly and inconſiderateneſs, ſuch their ſecurity, ſuch their ſurprize; and therefore it will be no matter of wonder, if ſuch likewiſe be their ſudden ruin and deſtruction. But of what ſpirit ſoever the men of the world are, how vainly and abſurdly ſoever they ſpend their time, how much ſoever they neglect their Lord and their Souls, as for you, who hear my Word, ſit under the ſound of the Goſpel, and profeſs your ſelves my Diſciples, and take upon you to be Chriſtians, and would be reckon'd a People taught of God, be you wiſe and wary, *Be ye ready.*

In the proſecution of this great and important Truth theſe things muſt be done.

1. We are to ſhew who this Lord is, and that he will certainly come.

2. We ſhall enquire what is to be underſtood by this coming of the Lord.

3. What this being ready for his coming doth import.

4. We ſhall prove to you that it is and ought to be the great work of Chriſtians, who own him for their *Lord*, to get themſelves into this readineſs; and then,

5. We ſhall labour to make a proper Application and uſe of the whole.

1. Then we are to ſhew who this Lord is, and

and that he will moſt certainly come: Here you are to know that this Lord is *Jeſus Chriſt*, *Immanuel*, God with us, God in our Nature; who as God hath a natural Dominion or Lordſhip, and as God-man a donative one, of which latter we are diſcourſing, and the ſacred Scripture plentifully ſpeaks, *Rom.* 8. 9. *Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we dye, we dye unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or dye, we are the Lords: For to this end Chriſt both dyed and roſe again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living:* He died that he might redeem and reſcue a People out of the jaws of Death and Ruine, and purchaſe them for himſelf: He roſe again that he might have and exerciſe power and ſovereign authority over them, the fullneſs of which authority, and the entire adminiſtration of his mediatorial Kingdom he was put into the actual poſſeſſion of at his Reſurrection from the dead: So, *Phil.* 2. 9, 10, 11. *God hath highly exalted him*, that is, *Chriſt Jeſus*, as you may learn from *Ver.* 5. *and hath given him a Name which is above every Name*, a ſupereminent Authority, *that at the Name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, both of things in Heaven, and things in Earth, and things under the Earth; and that every tongue ſhould confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* The Lordſhip of *Chriſt* is to be owned, acknowledged, and openly confeſs d by all thoſe that hear of him, and believe in him. If by the way any one ask, how this doth make for the glory of God the

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Father? the anſwer is ready: It makes for the Glory of his Faithfulneſs, in being as good as his Word, ſending in the fulneſs of time the *Meſſiah* whom he had promiſed; and as the honour which is given to Chriſt doth not terminate in him, but ſweetly paſſeth on, redounding to, and iſſuing in the Glory of his Father: and alſo therein appears the Glory of his Grace and Mercy to his People; in the Exaltation and advancement of *Chriſt* is clearly ſeen the free Grace and ſpecial Love of God the Father unto his Elect, whoſe bleſſed Head and Husband *Chriſt* is; take for this but one Scripture more which you may find in *Rev.* 19. 16. The Name of the Perſon there deſcribed according as he appeared to *John*, is ſaid to be *the Word of God*, the ſubſtantial Word of God, *i. e. Jeſus Chriſt*, and of him it is there ſaid, that he hath on his Veſture, and on his Thigh a Name written, *KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

Now this great and glorious Lord was once in compliance with his Fathers will, and in purſuance of his peoples welfare and happineſs, pleaſed to veil his Glory, to take upon him our Nature, and to cloath himſelf with our Infirmities, to Tabernacle among men in the form of a Servant, to become a ranſome for many, to offer up himſelf a Sacrifice, to pay the debts we had contracted, to ſatisfie for the ſins we had committed, to lay down the full price of our Redemption, to make Reconciliation, and to

to work an Everlaſting Righteouſneſs, with which his poor People being graciouſly inveſted, may appear before God with boldneſs and to acceptance.

This gracious deſign of his being finiſhed, and all that he had to do in his own Perſon upon Earth, and in a State of Humiliation and abaſement in order thereunto, he went away, and he did ſo for our ſakes, becauſe it was expedient for us, it made for our good and benefit, it contributed very largely thereunto. And he is very well where he is, exceeding well, being with him whom he loves beſt, ſet down on the right hand of the Father, where there is fulneſs of Joy, Delights and Pleaſures for evermore, and being there the Heavens that received him muſt contain him till the time appointed.

But He will come again, yea, Bleſſed be his Name, He will, He will. Of this he ſpake more than once to his Diſciples while here with them, and gave them as full aſſurance as could reſult from the Promiſe of him, who is Truth it ſelf and cannot lie; and upon this he did ſo much inſiſt, as for the promoting in all his people a care to prepare themſelves for his return, ſo for the ſupport and comfort of thoſe his Diſciples, whoſe Hearts were then deeply wounded, and even broken within them at the Thoughts and Conſideration of his approaching departure, and their being thereupon left as Sheep among Wolves, the Promiſe of his

return

return we have in *John* 14. 2, 3. *I go to prepare a place for you.* In which Words there is a Metaphor taken from Travellers upon the Road, one of whom leaving the reſt Rides before to the Inne, and takes up for himſelf and them as many Lodgings as will be ſufficient, and gets all things ready againſt they come; now ſaith Chriſt, O my People, I will be your Harbinger, I will go to Heaven before you, I will be there firſt, and there I will prepare for you, and make both place and all things elſe ready for you, againſt the time that you ſhall be ready: and accordingly, *Heb.* 6. 19, 20. The Apoſtle ſpeaking of that within the veil, ſaith, *Thither the forerunner is for us entred, even Jeſus, made an High Prieſt for ever after the Order of Mechizedeck.* And our Lord goeth on, *If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto my ſelf, that where I am there ye may be alſo.* He will come not to dwell with them here, but to fetch them hence, and to carry them to a place more ſuitable to him, more comfortable to them; a place where they ſhall never part; and where they ſhall never want, where they ſhall have ſuch variety and fulneſs of Soul-delights, that they ſhall deſire no more: again He ſpake of it, *John* 16. 22. *I will ſee you again, and your Heart ſhall rejoyce, and your joy no man ſhall take from you.* This Promiſe of ſeeing them is the Promiſe of a loving Viſit. I will for a while leave my glorious Palace, my Throne, my Fathers Boſom,

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and come to your ſorry Cottages, and when I come, it ſhall not be empty-handed, I will bring joy along with me: I will then compleat your Joy, you ſhall have enough not only to ſmooth your brow, but to refreſh and fill your Souls; and as I will bring Joy by my coming to you, ſo I will fix it and make it permanent by your going with me; of that Joy which I ſhall give you, you ſhall have an eternal Poſſeſſion; my Father will not take it from you, for he loves you too well, and none elſe ſhall, neither Men or Devils: So then, if Truth it ſelf is worthy of Credence, we are and may be ſure that our dear Lord will come again.

2. But I now come to ſpeak to the ſecond thing propounded, *viz.* What is to be underſtood by the coming of the Lord, or when is it that *Chriſt* will come? unto this enquiry I ſhall anſwer in theſe two things.

1. Our Lord will come at the laſt and great day, which for that reaſon is called the day of the Lord, that is, the day of his return, the day of his appearance; then he will come *in Perſon*, Acts 1. 10, 11. The *Apoſtles* being gathered together upon Mount *Olivet*, *Chriſt* was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their ſight, and two men, that is, two *Angels* in white raiment ſtood by them, and ſaid, *Why ſtand ye gazing up into Heaven?* what make you here? why do you miſpend your time in a vain looking? you have already beheld all that you were brought hither for, your Lord and

and Love is now withdrawn, and no more to be ſeen by you for one while. *This ſame Jeſus who is now taken up from you into Heaven, ſhall ſo come in like manner as ye have ſeen him go into Heaven.* He ſhall ſo come, and in like manner; how was that? thus. He ſhall come in his own Perſon, the ſame Perſon that now aſcended ſhall come again, he ſhall come with the ſame Soul and the ſame Body. He now aſcends and ſhall come again in and by his own Power, not needing the help and aſſiſtance of any one elſe. He ſhall come with the ſame Grandeur, Majeſty; now he went up in a Cloud, and when he comes again, it ſhall be in the Clouds of Heaven, ſo you have it in this, *Mat.* 24. 29, 30. *The Powers of the Heaven ſhall be ſhaken.* The very *Axis* of Heaven ſhall crack and break; the frame of the whole Univerſe ſhall ſhake and totter and tumble, all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved: *And there ſhall appear the ſign of the Son of man in Heaven.* By which you may with ſome underſtand, the Cloud in which he will come to Judgment, or with others the great ſound of a Trumpet and the voice of an Arch-angel, or with others a great light, and Majeſty and Glory with which the World ſhall be filled. *And then ſhall all the Tribes of the Earth Mourn*, that is, all thoſe that have been Haters of him and Enemies to him, and have riſen up in a deſperate Oppoſition to his Royal Intereſt and Government, his Truth and Ways and People. *And they ſhall ſee the Son of man coming in the Clouds of Heaven.* Now this coming of *Chriſt* is that of

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a *Judge to the World in general*, for the Collection and gathering before him of all Nations, and of all Perſons, whether they be Sheep or Goats, Friends or Foes, Righteous or Wicked, Holy or Profane; for the raiſing up of them that are Dead, who have lien for a long time in Silence and Sleeping in their Beds of Duſt, and for the bringing before him all thoſe that ſhall then be found alive and remaining, that ſo he might paſs a definitive Sentence upon them all, determining their Everlaſting State, and adjudging them either to Happineſs or Miſery, according to the Frame and Conſtitution of their Souls, the Management of their Lives, and thoſe things which every one of them hath done while here in the Body.

2. He may be ſaid to come at the hour of mans Death and Diſſolution, though then he doth not come to any, no not to the Saints themſelves, who are his dearly beloved, *Perſonally*, yet, if I may take liberty ſo to Phraſe it, he comes *Virtually*, by his Power and Authority, giving Commiſſion to Death his Meſſenger to fetch them out of the World; that they might be conducted by Angels into the Chamber of his preſence, and the Boſom of his Love; thus he comes to particular Believers at the time of their departure hence. Death being ſent by him, comes armed with a full Commiſſion to cut the bond which ſo long had kept the Soul and Body in a ſtrict, cloſe, and intimate union, and to ſummon

them into the other World. Here you have liv'd ſo long, and ſpent ſo much time in a ſtrange Countrey, where you have met with a great many difficulties and unkindneſſes, but now the Glaſs is run out which was turned up as the meaſure of your continuance and abode here; you have lived to the utmoſt bounds, the laſt moment of your day: Whether you have minded the buſineſs about which you were ſent, and finiſhed the work your great Lord and Maſter did ſet you, it is your part to conſider, there will be no more time allowed you for the finiſhing of it; whether you are prepared to leave the World and make your appearance before the Tribunal of your Judge or no, there is no time now to prepare in, howſoever you have lived, and whatſoever ſtate you are in, you muſt go, you muſt preſently go, and give an account of your ſelf to God.

Now when Death comes to a godly Perſon, we may ſay that his Lord is come for him, and calls him away; as in another caſe, when Gracious Souls have been kept for a ſeaſon in great darkneſs, labouring under diſmal apprehenſions and fears, when there have been the withdrawings of God from them, veiling of his face and covering himſelf with a Cloud; when there have been violent temptations and furious aſſaults made upon them by the reſtleſs malicious and implacable enemy, and together with this, diſquiets, uproars, and hideous ſtorms in their own Conſciences, and as the iſſue and pro-

product of all, an innumerable number of confuſed and perplexing thoughts, and then afterwards the Clouds are ſcattered, darkneſs vaniſheth, the day breaks, and the Sun of Righteouſneſs ariſeth upon them with beams of Light and wings of healing; when the roaring Lion is chained up, the tempter taken off, ſtorms are laid, and fears confuted; when, in a word, they have had bleſſed Illapſes of Joy, the delightful ſmiles of God, and the ſheddings of his love abroad in their Hearts by the divine Spirit which is given to them, then, I ſay, then they have in an Holy extaſie, and with triumphant, heart-raviſhing Joy cried out, *He is come, He is come.*

And ſo have others too, they have ſung the ſame ſong when ready to ſet ſail for the Land of Promiſe; being weary of living among bad Neighbours in a wicked and troubleſome World, who are ſet on fire with the fire of Hell, or like the raging Sea continually caſting forth Mire and Dirt, and foaming out their own ſhame, the ſinful and poyſonous Exhalations of whoſe corrupt and putrid Hearts do wofully infect the very Air they breath in, and ſpread far and near a Soul-deſtroying Plague, whereby thouſands are cut off and drop into Hell; when they have been quite tired out with carrying ſo long about with them a Body of Sin and Death, which ſtinks in their Noſtrils; a Law in their Members, which is continually warring againſt the Law in their Minds, and

too too often prevails to the bringing of them into Captivity; when they have been tugging at the Oar, and labouring hard in Duties, and yet after all their labour cannot perform them with that Life and fervour and fixedneſs and inlargement as they would; when they have been dealing with their own Hearts, and taking a great deal of pains, and yet cannot get them to a right frame, nor keep them in it; but the work doth every day return upon them, after all, there is much deadneſs and dulneſs, and hardneſs, and coldneſs, and inſtability. In ſhort, when they have been thinking of Heaven, and praying for it, and preparing for it, and even broken with longings for it, and at length Death hath knockt at their door, and given them notice, that they are come to the cloſing act of their Life, and muſt ſuddenly go off the Stage, they have greatly rejoyced, as reckoning the day of their Death much better than the day of their Birth, and cried out, *Now he is come*, long look'd for is come at laſt. Now for the coming of our Lord both in his own Perſon at the laſt day, and by his Meſſenger Death to every one of us in our particular day, it concerns all of us to be *ready*.

This brings me to the third thing propounded, which is to enquire, what this *readineſs* is, what it imports, what is required to the making of it up; and to that I anſwer in theſe two things: we ought to endeavour and preſs after two things. 1. A

1. A readineſs of State.
2. A readineſs of Mind or Spirit.

1. We ſhould induſtriouſly labour for *a readineſs of State.* Put our ſelves forth to the utmoſt that we may, and make ſure that we do get into ſuch a poſture as to be counted a people prepared for the Lord: if you look into *Luke* 1. 17. You will find that expreſſion. *John* the *Baptiſt*, who was the Præcurſor, or Forerunner of Chriſt, was to come furniſhed with, and acted by the Spirit, and Power of *Elias*, which was a warm Spirit, and a mighty Power, but for what end? that Text informs you, it was *to turn the Hearts of the Fathers to the Children, and the diſobedient to the Wiſdom of the Juſt, to make ready a People prepared for the Lord.* i. e. For the Lord Jeſus at his coming in the Fleſh; that they might be well inſtructed, and rightly diſpoſed; matter in due Caſe for him to work upon, brought into ſuch an Excellency of Spirit and Temper, as readily to perform their Duty God, and with all Alacrity of Soul welcome, entertain and embrace Chriſt and the Goſpel upon the firſt Appearance and Promulgation, that they might be a people fit to ſubmit to, and be made members of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was then at hand.

Now the ſame is our work, and the Lord grant, it may accordingly be minded and followed by us all, to get our ſelves into ſuch a State, as will be ſuitable to *Chriſt*, when he

comes, ſuch a State as will be grateful, and acceptable to him. We ought carefully to look to it that he do not find us in our Sluttery, in a filthy and naſty Condition, ſuch as may juſtly render us odious and loathſome to him, ſo that being of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, He will not endure to look upon us, but abhor to admit us into his Boſom, or to tread his Courts, or to dwell in his Holy Hill, but ſay, away, away with them, caſt them out of my Sight, my Mind cannot be toward them, bury them in Hell: that is a ſweet paſſage of the Apoſtle *Paul*, and one would think it ſhould work mightily in them that read it, raiſe up ſuch a deſire, O that it might be ſo with me! *Coloſ.* 3. 4. *When Chriſt who is our Life ſhall appear, then ſhall ye alſo appear with him in Glory.* Believe it, it will be far otherwiſe with a great part of the World, and I fear it will be otherwiſe with a great number of profeſſors, who are now well thought of by others, and think as well of themſelves, and hold their Heads high, concluding their Condition good and ſafe, but will be convinced of their groſs miſtake when it is too late to rectifie it; Death will find them, and the Reſurrection will find them, and Judgment will find them; but poor Wretches, how will they be found? Truly in a State of contrariety to Chriſt. He will be in his Beauty, and they in their Blemiſhes and Deformity: He in his Holineſs, and they in their Wickedneſs: He in his Glory, and they in

in their Shame: He as being the Brightneſs of his Fathers Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon, they as having on the Image and likeneſs of their Father the Devil, and looking as black as Hell it ſelf. That which ſhould be the Matter of our higheſt ambition is, that we may be then found in a State of ſuitableneſs to Chriſt. He in his Glory, and we in our Glory: He having on the Glory of the only begotten of the Father, and we the Glory of Adopted Children: He being the Glory of *God*, and we the Glory of *Chriſt*.

Now to ſay no more to this at preſent, then (and never till then) are Men and Women got into a readineſs of State; when they are in a ſtate of Grace, renewed in the Spirit of their Minds, and born again, made partakers of a new and Divine Nature; if you would be found ready, you muſt look carefully that you do not fail of the Grace of God, but have been under a bleſſed Tranſlation, turned from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan to God; that though Sin be now found in you, and for your Hearts you cannot get quite rid of it, the Wall muſt be pull'd down before all the Ivy will be out, yet you ſhall not at that day be found in Sin; dead, quite dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins: See that you be not found in a ſtate of Alienation and Eſtrangement from God, in a ſtate of Enmity and Oppoſition to him; but in a ſtate of Reconciliation, of Juſtification and Sanctificati-

on; ſome of his Friends, of his familiar and intimate Acquaintance, who live to him, and walk with him in a cloſe Communion; never think of being ready, without being really Holy, of being prepared for your laſt and great change, unleſs you have paſſed through a renewing change. The Wiſe Virgins were ready for the Bridegroom at his coming, but remember and conſider how it was with them; they had not only a fair Profeſſion, but together with that, the Life and Power of Godlineſs, a lighted Lamp indeed in their Hands which did not go out, and beſides that, Oil in their Veſſels, Grace in their Hearts.

2. We ſhould likewiſe carefully look to this, that there be in us a readineſs of Mind and Spirit; of this we find mention made in the bleſſed Scriptures, upon another account: I ſhall inſtance in one place, where the Apoſtle *Peter* directs his Exhortation to the *Elders*, or Miniſters of the Church, 1 *Pet.* 5. And them he would have *to feed the Flock of God which is among them*, with that, and with none but that, and with all that Proviſion which its Lord and great Shepherd had ordered for it, *taking*, ſaith He, the overſight thereof, not by conſtraint, but willingly, not for filthy Lucre, but of a ready Mind; προθύμως, with a prompt and chearful Mind, with a Mind ſweetly inclin'd, yea ſtrongly carried out that way; we ſay ſometimes of Perſons when we ſee how aukwardly they ſet about what is ſet them, that they do it

it as thoſe who have no Mind to it; now Miniſters ſhould preach as thoſe that have a Mind to it, and do all the work of their Office, as thoſe that have a Mind to it, and all of you ſhould do, O Saints, the Duties of your Relations and places as thoſe that have a Mind to do them; for that puts a beauty upon your Actions, and makes them amiable: *If there be a willing Mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath*, though that which he hath be poor and little, as appears by the Honour *Chriſt* put upon the Widow who caſt two mites into the Treaſury. Now it is your Duty to get this readineſs of Mind againſt your Lords coming.

There are, bleſſed be God, and for ever admired be his free and rich Grace, that there are among us a great many who are brought into a *readineſs of State*, effectually called to be Saints, *i. e.* called by the Word to be ſuch, and made ſuch by the bleſſed Influence and powerful over-ſhadowings of the Spirit, by which He hath formed Chriſt in them; but they have not yet attained to this readineſs of Mind, they are backward and ready to flee off. When they think the King of Terrours doth Arreſt them, they Startle and Recoil, *Pſal.* 39. 10. When *David*, though a man after Gods Heart, was almoſt conſumed by the blow of his hand, he cried, *remove thy ſtroke away from me*, do not repeat thy blow leſt thou ſtrike me to duſt: and again, *ver.* 13. *O ſpare me*,

me, that I may recover ſtrength, before I go hence, and be ſeen no more. So when that meſſage was brought by the Prophet to good *Hezekiah*, *Iſa.* 38. 1, 2. *Set thine houſe in Order, for thou ſhalt Die, and not Live*: Though he had walked before the Lord in Truth and with a perfect Heart, and done that which was good in the ſight of God, yet as if he had heard ſome dreadful news, and death would do him a real and great unkindneſs, *he turned* his face toward the Wall and wept ſore, and as he tells us afterward, in that Chapter; *He chattered like a Crane, or a Swallow, and mourned as a Dove*, becauſe he then thought, *He ſhould not ſee the Lord, even the Lord in the Land of the Living*, i. e. in this World, *I ſhall behold man no more, with the Inhabitants of the World.* But this was their Infirmity, and we ſhould labour to get our *Minds ready*, and that for theſe two things.

1. To welcome *Chriſt* when e're he comes.
2. To go to *Chriſt* when we are called.

1. We ſhould have our Minds in a readineſs to welcome *Chriſt* when he doth come, and Death too when it is ſent as a Meſſenger by and from him; ſo ready as not to be affrighted, nor unduely concerned at its Harbingers and Forerunners, Sickneſſes and Diſeaſes, grinding Aches and Pains; no, nor at it's own approaches, or moſt wounding and fatal ſtroke; but hold up our Head, ſince our Redemption and higheſt Exaltation draweth nigh: Is my laſt

laſt day come? is my Lord come? O bleſſed day! O thrice joyful day! when there is a neceſſity of dying, there ſhould alſo be a willingneſs to Dye; there is, ſaith *Paul*, *A Crown of Righteouſneſs, which God the righteous Judge will give unto all them that love his appearing.* The Souls love to the appearing of Chriſt both at Judgment and at Death, is a frame that God doth particularly obſerve, and will glorioufly reward; now this that Holy Man found in himſelf, *Acts* 21. 13. *I am ready not only to be bound at Jeruſalem*, to be thrown into a Gaol, or to walk up and down in the Streets dragging, like a Criminal, a Chain after me, *but alſo to die for the Name of the Lord Jeſus.* I will do it with all my Heart, without diſpute or reluctancy; and as I will not ſtick at dying, ſo neither at the manner, nor the kind of it, whether it be at a Stake, or a Gibbet, or a Block, or by being offered up for a burnt-offering; I matter it not, my Maſter ſhall chooſe for me. I will be as ready to lay down my Life for Chriſt, as ever I was to go to bed when weary, there ſhall be no loathneſs at all in me.

How greatly have ſome precious Saints longed for this Appearance of Chriſt, and been almoſt impatient, not knowing how to bear a delay and to wait ſo long as they have done! how have they groan'd, being burden'd! how have their deſires flamed, and the fire burned, and their Hearts been hot within them! how could they have cried out in their Pangs, as the Mo-

Mother of *Siſera* did when ſhe hoped to ſee her Son return a joyful Conqueror, in a Triumphant Chariot with a Palm of Victory, *Judg.* 5. 28. *Why is his Chariot ſo long in coming? why tarry the Wheels of his Chariot?* And when they have heard (as I may ſay) the Jumping and Ratling of the Wheels, I mean, when they have had ſome comfortable Signs and Tokens of his coming, how have their paſſionate and aſpiring Souls been ready to break Priſon, and run out to meet him! how have their Hearts leapt within them at the thoughts thereof, even as the Babe did in the Womb of *Elizabeth*! Take notice of that paſſage of the enamoured *Spouſe*, in *Cant.* 4. 8. *The Voice of my Beloved!* heark, heark, this knock at my door is given by his moſt Gracious Hand! it is, I am ſure, it is his Voice that ſaith, *Come with me from Lebanon, my Spouſe, with me, from Lebanon, from the Top of Amana, from the Top of Shenir and Hermon, from the Lions, from the Mountains of the Leopards*! Come, my Spouſe, come leave this Land of *Cabul*, this dirty and filthy World, this vile and wicked World, this malicious and cruel World; your reſt is not in it, it is full of beaſts of Prey, and by conſequence of Ruine and Rapine; it lieth in wickedneſs, and is deluged with the precious Blood of Saints. Come up hither, to a place of Peace, to the third Heaven, where there is a laſting Calm and Eternal Sun-ſhine. O! ſaith ſhe, this is the Voice of my Beloved, and a plea-

pleaſant Voice it is, a joyful ſound. My Friends, I knew, and was moſt nearly related to an eminently gracious Saint, who being viſited with his laſt ſickneſs, and obſerving his Phyſician to whiſper to his Friend at the further end of the Room, asked him the reaſon why he did ſo, who replied, Why, Sir, did you hear what I ſaid? he again anſwered, Yes, I did, you ſaid I would dye; and what, do you think I am afraid to dye? no, man, no, I have been preparing for it, and longing for it theſe forty Years together, and I am not afraid of it now, it is the beſt news you can bring me. Here was a bleſſed readineſs of Mind, to bid his Lord welcome, and Death welcome.

2. We ſhould labour to get our Minds into a readineſs to go to Chriſt, to go upon the call, upon the firſt call: doth he make ſignifications, that it is his will to have us home? doth he by his Providence ſay, Come, Soul, come to me, come to Heaven; we ſhould joyfully ſay, Lord, I come: Thus it was with *Moſes*, who had done great ſervice for *Iſrael*, having been Inſtrumental for the delivering them out of the Houſe of Bondage, and carrying them through an howling Wilderneſs, and bringing them to the very borders of the Land of Promiſe; but into that good Land he muſt not enter; No, ſaith God, thou didſt treſpaſs againſt me at the waters of *Meribah*, and didſt not ſanctifie me in the midſt of the Children of *Iſrael*, therefore get thee up to Mount *Nebo*, and

and die there; accordingly he did, without any diſpute, as you may find, *Deut.* 34. 1, 5. *He went up from the Plains of Moab unto the Mountains of Nebo, to the top of Piſgah, and there he died.* Good man, ſince he muſt not go into *Canaan*, he was well pleas'd at his going into Heaven.

Oh that we might be ſo too! what ſhould hinder us? what is there here comparable to that which is to be enjoyed there? What are Friends below, to a God and Chriſt above? what is Vanity to that Glory? what the puddle water of ſenſual Delights, to that Chriſtal River of Pleaſures which is at Gods right Hand? yea, what are our cleareſt Sanctuary-ſights to the Beatifical Viſion, when we ſhall behold his face in Righteouſneſs, and ſee the bleſſed *Jeſus* our Redeemer, Husband and Head, as He is? Oh, when we have our Summons, we ſhould ſay, Lord, I come! I would forſake all to follow thee, to be with thee; my Soul is now chain'd to the Body, an infirm Body, a vile Body; by which I am miſerably clogg'd and hindered, ſo that I cannot do the things that I would, my holy motions are dull, and heavy, and ſlow; if at any time I would be upon the wing, and get my Heart to a due Elevation, there are weights preſſing down; when I am up I cannot keep ſo, but find declinings, flutterings, wanderings, inſtead of an Holy Fixation; when I would run the way of Gods Commandments, my Chariot-Wheels are taken off,

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ſo that I drive on heavily: My Soul is knit, and faſtned to the Body, and by the Body ſtaked down here; and becauſe of this *I deſire to be diſſolved.* Oh that this preſent Union might be broken, this knot untied! I long, yea, I long to be looſed and ſet at liberty; that ſo I might be gone where I would be, and my wearied, but enamoured Soul, may take it's flight to the *Mountains of Myrrhe, and Beds of Spices,* where my glorious *Saviour* is, and it may take everlaſting and unſpeakable delight in mutual embraces, and in deareſt, fulleſt, repeated, reciprocal Acts of Love and Kindneſs.

This was that ſublime and excellent frame of Spirit, unto which the Holy Apoſtles and Primitive Saints had happily attained, according to the account given, 2 *Cor.* 5. 8. *We are confident and willing rather to be abſent from the Body, and preſent with the Lord.* It is true, out of humble Submiſſion and obedience to our great Lord and Maſter, as we ought to be, ſo we are content to ſtay in the Body as long as he will have us ſtay; we muſt not break Priſon, and we dare not do it, knowing that we are not at our own command and diſpoſe; we did not erect this Tabernacle, nor have we any right to pull it down; yea and more than ſo, for ſome reaſons we could, if our Lord pleaſe, we could be willing to continue a little longer here, notwithſtanding the Inconveniencies, Exerciſes, and Vexations that we meet with; we would do our Heavenly Maſter better ſervice, we would

would bring him more and greater Glory than hitherto we have done; and for the Churches ſake, that we might be further uſeful unto them; and for our dear Wives ſake, that we might be a ſupport and comfort unto them; and for our Childrens ſake, that we might provide for them, and take care of their Education and Training up; and, if it ſtand with the Will of God, before we die may ſee Chriſt formed in their Hearts, and them walking in the fear and way of God, and ſo may lie down in the joyful aſſurance of their ſtanding up in our ſtead, and ſerving the God of their Fathers; yet for all this, if we were put to our choice, we know what we would chooſe, of the two we had *rather* be abſent from the Body and preſent with the *Lord.* Our Husbands and Wives are dear, our Children and Friends are dear, our Flocks and Congregations are dear, we have an high eſteem of them, and an hearty affection for them; we love them all, and we would enjoy them all, and we would gladly be helpful, and uſeful, and a bleſſing in our ſeveral places to them all; yet our God is dearer to us than them all, and ſo is our precious Lord Jeſus; and we would leave all here below to go to them above; and further read and conſider, what is ſaid in the 1. 2, 3, and 4, *verſes* of the ſame Chapter. *We groan earneſtly, deſiring to be cloathed upon with our houſe which is from Heaven; not that we would be uncloathed, but cloathed upon, that mortality might be*

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ſwallowed up of Life: Which is all one as if he had ſaid, It is not meerly for Death's ſake that we are thus longingly deſirous after it: Take Death as it is in its ſelf conſidered, without reference to a future Life and better State which it lets the gracious Soul into, there is no comelineſs nor ſweetneſs in it for which it ſhould be deſired; and ſaith *Paul*, We do not ſo deſire it: We would not gladly be uncloathed and no more, ſtript and left naked; we would not ſhake off this old Friend and Companion, the Body, becauſe it is grown weak, and feeble, and withered, having loſt its former beauty and ſtrength, but we deſire to dye for Heaven's ſake, and for Glory's ſake, and for God's and Chriſt's ſake.

Theſe two things now make up that readineſs which it is our Duty and Intereſt to be continually preſſing after, until we have attained to it, *viz.* A readineſs *of State*, that our Souls may be fit for his Appearance, fit for his coming, that they may be put into ſuch a Condition as will certainly render them pleaſing and acceptable to him, that *we* may appear lovely in his eyes; and ſo his Heart may be toward us, and his delight in us; and *he* again may appear not terrible, but precious and amiable in our eyes, and we may behold him without any conſternation and amazement; that we may not at his coming be frighted out of our wits, as thoſe Kings of the Earth, and rich men, and great men, and mighty men, and chief Captains will

be, who are ſpoken of in *Rev.* 6. 15, 16, 17. Who ſhall hide *themſelves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and ſay to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come, and who ſhall be able to ſtand?* And together with that a readineſs *of mind and ſpirit*, ſo as to be moſt cordially willing and free to bid him welcome to us, and alſo to go to him, that ſo where he is, we may be alſo.

Having thus ſhewn you what is that readineſs which we intend, and are in purſuance of the Command in the Text urging upon you, we now come to the Proof of the Doctrine, and to evidence it to you, that it is a very great and neceſſary, and indiſpenſible Duty incumbent upon all thoſe who have heard of the Lord Jeſus, and of his Coming, induſtriouſly to make out after this readineſs: This is bound upon you by our Lord himſelf, when he here ſaith, *Be ye alſo ready.* I remember that Paſſage of his concerning Watchfulneſs, *Mark* 13. 37. *What I ſay unto you, I ſay unto all, Watch:* All are concerned, all obliged, every Mothers Child of you, high and low, rich and poor, young and old, one and other: It is as true in the preſent Caſe: What our *Lord* did in this Scripture ſay to his Diſciples and Hearers at that time, he ſpeaks to you at this time, *Be ye ready*; for as *Paul* aſſures us, *Rom.* 4. 15. *Whatſoever things were written aforetime, were written for*

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our learning; Promiſes for our encouragement, and Precepts for our Practice; and theſe words of his may be thus Paraphras'd; My *Diſciples*, I am ſhortly to dye, and to go from hence into another World, where I ſhall be at a great diſtance from you, and altogether inviſible to you; my ſuffering-work here will ſhortly have an end, but there is great and glorious work in Heaven, and that I muſt in mine own Perſon tend and accompliſh, for it is of everlaſting concernment to my Father's Glory, and the Honour of mine own Name, and to the Good, and Comfort, and Happineſs of you and all my People: But there is a time appointed upon Counſel, and by Agreement between my Father and me, wherein I am to come again, for I and you love one another too well to be pleaſed and ſatisfied with being at ſo great a diſtance, and ſo far aſunder, therefore I will be ſure to come; this is my declared Will, my fixed Reſolve, I have told my Father of it, *John* 17. 14. *Father, I will, that they alſo whom thou haſt given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou haſt given me:* And this I have left upon record, and made known to the World; I will have my Church and People above, they are my Spouſe and Children, and where ſhould they be but where their Husband and Father is? they are my Body and Members, and where ſhould they be but where their Head is? Heaven, which is the habitation of my Fathers and mine

own Holineſs and Glory, is the beſt and fitteſt place for us eternally to enjoy our ſelves and one another in, and I will fetch them all thither: Some of them I fetch home by Death, I ſend that pale Horſe for them; the *King* of Terrors is my Meſſenger and their Servant: now one comes in that way, and then another, as I think fit, and as they grow fit, as they finiſh their work and ripen for glory. I have with me now ſuch a multitude as no man can number, and when I ſent for any of them, I found them ready, every one ready, ready for Death, and ready for Glory, and ready for me; I found them ſo as I would have them, and there are thouſands and thouſands more that will be ready every one in their ſeaſon; as ſome are going off, ſo there are ſome coming on; they will be glad of my coming, and of Death's coming, and glad to come to me; they will be prepared for their Journey and for their home, when my Meſſenger or my ſelf in Perſon do come for them, neither of us ſhall need to ſtay 'till they waſh and dreſs themſelves, and put on their beautiful Wedding-garments, for at that time they ſhall be in their beauty and bravery, even as a Bride made ready for her Husband. Now do you think of it, and conſider what you have to do, whether you are not concerned to look to it that you take the ſame care and pains, that you be found in the ſame ſtate, wiſe for your Souls, and prepared for your Lord; *Be ye alſo ready.* Now

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ſurcher to make this out to you, that to get into this readineſs is your main buſineſs, and which you ought with greateſt earneſtneſs and induſtry to mind and purſue, I ſhall ſpeak to theſe five particulars, deſiring you duely to weigh and conſider them.

1. You are not, none of you is ready as yet; if you were, you would not be here; none lives upon Earth after He is once thoroughly fit for Heaven; as long as you continue here you may be ſure there is ſomething lacking in your Graces, and ſomething to be added to your Work and Duties; for certain, thoſe, all thoſe of you that to this day are in the ſtate of corrupt mature, in your unregeneracy, alienated from the Life of God through the ignorance and perverſeneſs that is in you, are far from this readineſs; there is not one pin ſtuck, nothing at all done in order thereunto, you are altogether in your nakedneſs and ſhame: You may very well look upon your ſelves with bluſhing, and if you appear ſo before your Lord, He will look upon you with loathing, you will be no other than a ſtiuk in his Noſtrils.

And as for thoſe of you who are indeed ſanctified, renewed, and made partakers of Grace, you are not yet quite dreſs'd. I dare ſay, you will be free to confeſs that you, notwithſtanding all the time you have ſpent, and all the means you have enjoyed, are neither what you ſhould be, nor what you would be. Now

you know, how it is with you in a Morning! if a Friend, a Stranger, ſpecially if it be a Perſon of Quality, for whom you have an high eſteem and veneration, knock at your door, and comes in and asks for you, and ſaith he muſt needs ſee and ſpeak with you, and that before you are dreſs'd, you are greatly troubled, and would be glad if you could run your Heads into an Hole, and hide your ſelves, as being very unwilling to appear before him in ſuch a pickle; and is there not reaſon it ſhould be much more ſo in the preſent caſe? Many a Chriſtian is made a partaker of the bleſſed Life of God, and is awake unto Righteouſneſs, and got up out of the profound ſleep of Sin and carnal Security, and hath in ſome meaſure put on Chriſt, not only in his Righteouſneſs by Faith, but in his Holineſs too by Imitation, but yet he is far from being quite dreſs'd, and ſtanding compleat in all the Will of God: When he comes to take a ſerious view of himſelf, and thoroughly to ſearch into his Heart and Life, and ſee how matters ſtand with him, he would not for more than he hath of this Worlds goods, that his deareſt Lord and Love ſhould come and find him ſo; I pray, Chriſtians, take and ſet often, and often before you the glaſs of the Scripture, which is both a *perfect* one, making a moſt true and exact repreſentation of things and perſons as they are, and ſo *large*, that you may ſee your ſelves in it all over from Head to Foot; firſt ſtudy, and

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that curiouſly, *God* and Chriſt, acquaint your ſelves with them, becauſe you may in them ſee what you ſhould be, for it is their Image that you ſhould bear, their Spirit you ſhould have, their Nature and Life, you ſhould, ſo far as you are capable, be conformed to; therefore take ſpecial notice of them, and ſee with what Beams they ſhine, with what Beauty and Glory they are inveſted, and fix the Idea of them upon your Minds and Thoughts, and then reflect upon your ſelves, and enter upon the compariſon, and ask the queſtion, Am I ſuch an one as doth reſemble God? Am I a Follower and Imitator of God as a dear Child? Do I ſhew forth the Virtues and Praiſes of him, who hath called me out of darkneſs into this marvellous Light?

O my Friends, be prevailed with to take this courſe, and get into the Knowledge of your ſelves; ſee, are there not many deficiencies in you, many Spots and Blemiſhes upon you? Have you not ſtill got on ſome filthy Garments, and as for thoſe beautiful Garments, that change of Raiment, with which you have been furniſhed by the bleſſed *Angel* of the Covenant, doth it not hang too looſe upon you; and I pray tell me, would you have your Lord come and take you in ſuch a caſe? No, no, I dare ſay, you would not: well, to ſhut up this particular, I am ſure as I can be of any thing, that if you take a ſtrict account of your ſelf, may I not ſay, if you have but an eye, and

take only a ſuperficial view of your ſelves, you will find a great deal lacking in your Faith, and in your Love, and in other Graces, and that there is much amiſs which calls for mending, and ſo you come exceeding ſhort in your Preparation; though there be not in you a damnable deficience, yet there is a diſhonouring one, and therefore upon this acconnt you muſt not ſit down in your careleſneſs and neglect as Perſons that had attained, but have need to ſhake off an idle and liſtleſs temper, and beſtir your ſelves, and with all the ſpeed you can make, get into another frame and better order than that which you are now in: Though you have been waſhed in the Fountain opened for Sin and for Uncleanneſs, the precious Blood of Chriſt, as of a Lamb without ſpot, and though you have waſhed alſo in the Tears of Goſpel-Repentance which you have ſincerely and plentifully ſhed, yet our Saviour tells you, there is occaſion for *waſhing your Feet*; and may I not alſo ſay, there is ſo much difficulty not only in *making* clean, but likewiſe in *keeping* clean; there will be ſuch new filth contracted, you will ſee there is room left for further waſhing of Head and Heart too, yea all over, and cleanſing your ſelves from all filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit, for as yet you have not *perfected your Holineſs*.

2. Know and Mind this, that as you are not yet ready, ſo it is no facile eaſie thing for a poor polluted Creature to get it ſelf into a ſtate

ſtate of readineſs, it is not skipping out of a ſtate of ſin into a ſtate of Glory at a leap. You will find a great deal to do before preparation-work comes to be quite finiſhed; every piece of Heart-work is hard work; every one that hath in good earneſt ſet his hand to it, will make that report of it; it carrieth a great deal of difficulty along with it, yea ſo much difficulty as would be altogether inſuperable to us, were it not that every One who doth in the uprightneſs of his Soul engage thereunto, may encourage himſelf with the comfortable Hope and Expectation of divine aſſiſtance, ſince Gods Grace is ſufficient for all his people, and his power is and ſhall be manifeſted, his Omnipotent arm made bare and ſtretched out in their weakneſs. Alas! our Souls are exceedingly diſordered, and our Hearts out of tune; there is none of you but would be found too light, if you ſhould be weighed in the Ballance of the Sanctuary; take the Holieſt among you, and you do not live as you *ſhould*, and if you ſhould now die, do you think to die as you *would?* you cannot now perform the work of Beggars, that is Prayer, and therefore you cannot look upon your ſelves as fit for the work of Angels, that is *Praiſes*, which calls for a more raiſed and enlarged frame; you find it hard to call in a wandering thought, and to fix a volatile fluttering thought, how hard then to be continuually with God? You find it hard to prepare for a Duty and for an Ordinance, and do you

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not judge it harder to prepare for diſſolution? you find it hard to fit your ſelves for the ſanctifying of a ſhort *Sabbath* upon Earth; what is it then to get fit for the celebration of an eternal *Sabbath* in Heaven? You ſometimes ſee cauſe to bluſh and be aſhamed to lift up your faces unto God, how much then muſt be done before you can with boldneſs and ſatisfaction behold his face in Glory, and Sun your ſelves in the Light of his Countenance. In a word, if ever you did really attempt the thing, you find it hard to get ready to meet your Lord in a ſhort viſit; O then, what will it be to get ready for the Marriage Solemnity between Him and his Spouſe, Him and your Souls! Verily, it will require a great deal of Care and Pains.

Obſerve, I beſeech you, to this end, that Counſel which is in the Scripture given you, 2 *Pet.* 3. 14. *Give diligence that ye may be found of him in peace, without ſpot and blameleſs.* Sure you would be glad to be found in Peace, that there may not be any diſcontents and quarrels, that when he comes he may not fall out with you, and chide you, ſaying, My mind cannot be toward you, you are ſuch as I can take no Pleaſure in, *Depart from me ye curſed*; but that you may be found in Peace, and hereupon nothing may paſs between you but love and kindneſs to all Eternity; that you may have an holy boldneſs toward him, and he may take a ſingular delight in you: certainly, if you have any ſpiritual ſenſe of the things that concern the

the Kingdom of God and your precious Souls, you will readily acknowledge, that this is a matter of higheſt importance; for without doubt you will all be found, ſo found of God as that you will be brought before him; but what a dreadful thing will it be for a Soul to be found in Sin, and in Wrath, and in Enmity; for God to find him in Indignation, and come forth againſt him with his Weapons of Indignation to do Execution upon him! It was a ſad thing for *Ahab* when the Prophet *Elijah* found him, having before imbrued his Hands in the Blood of *Naboth*, what did *Ahab* thereupon ſay? *Haſt thou found me, O mine Enemy!* he expected a ſevere rattling from him, and the denunciation of ſore and heavy Judgments: He found him to his Sorrow and Confuſion; but how much more dreadful a thing will it be, when at the day of account, the poor loſt ruin'd Soul ſhall ſay to God, Haſt thou found me O mine Enemy! but how ſweet and comfortable will it be for you to be found in peace, when *Chriſt* ſhall have much to ſay for you, but not one word againſt you!

Now in order hereunto the Apoſtle adviſeth that you be *without ſpot and blameleſs*, i. e. not in a *Legal*, but in an *Evangelical* Goſpel-ſence. See to it, that though you have your ſpots, yet you have your beauty too; though you are not all fair, yet you are not all ſpot; again ſee to it, that though you have ſpots of *Infirmity*, which may be ſeen upon the Godly, yet you have

not

not ſpots of *Impiety*, which are inconſiſtent with a State of Grace, and to be ſeen in none but wicked ones; ſee to it, that the ſpots which are upon you are only the ſpots of *Children*, and not thoſe of *Baſtards*; that though you have ſome *blemiſhing* ſpots, yet you have no *branding* ſpots.

Now that this may be, ſaith the Apoſtle, *Give diligence*, do not ſit down under diſcouragement, and ſay, is it a likely thing, nay is it poſſible that ever we ſhould get into ſuch a condition? we, who have in us ſo much Corruption, and are liable to ſo many Temptations, and live in ſuch a polluted World, and have ſo many wayes to walk in, that are full of Filth and Dirt, and are in danger to ſtep aſide every ſtep we take; know, it doth not become Men and Women pretending to Religion and profeſſing Godlineſs, to talk after ſuch a rate; but reckon thus with your ſelves, God in his Word requires this, and others through his Grace have attained to it, they have been accounted ſpotleſs and blameleſs, and therefore it is my buſineſs to ſet to it; this State is proper and neceſſary for me, I muſt deſign and aim at it; and be the difficulties what they will, I muſt be the more induſtrious; *Be diligent*, σπουδάσατε, which carrieth in it three things.

Firſt, Make it your buſineſs, ſtudy your ſelves, your Rule, how to carry, how to order your lives, and to direct your ſteps, how you ſhould

ſhould walk at home and abroad, how in your Callings and Relations and Converſes, that you may keep a Conſcience void of offence both toward God, and toward Men.

Secondly, Be intent upon it, and take as much pains as you can. It is not a ſlight and ſlack hand that will ſerve the turn, but follow it hard, and make it your daily imployment, follow it now and to it again to morrow, without any idle and careleſs intermiſſion; thoſe that manage matters to purpoſe, and enter in by the ſtrait Gate to Glory, are not lazy ſeekers but induſtrious Strivers.

Thirdly, As you muſt make it your buſineſs, and be intent upon it, ſo make all the haſte in it that you can; loſe no time, but begin as ſoon as you can; the dreſſing of ſome Perſons Bodies takes up a great deal of time, perhaps when afterward they come to reflect and conſider it, they will ſee cauſe to own it was too much; but the dreſſing of the Soul will neceſſarily require a great deal; well, take that with you in the ſecond place: It is no eaſie thing to get into a readineſs, you muſt be diligent, yea uſe all diligence; a little care and a little pains will not do the work, ſuch very foul pieces as our Hearts call for a great deal of waſhing, they will not eaſily be made clean; and this brings to the next particular.

3. The getting of your ſelves into this readineſs for the coming of your Lord, will be work enough for your whole Life; as the comfort

fort and bleſſed fruit of it will reach to the length of Eternity, ſo the doing of it will reach to the end of your time here; had you no Trades to drive, no Families to tend, no Worldly cares to take, nothing of an Inferiour and tranſitority Nature to ingage your Minds and Thoughts, you will find Preparation for Death, Judgment and Eternity work enough. What then do you think, now you have ſo many Irons in the Fire, ſuch a multitude of occaſions and avocations that every day and condition brings along with it? and indeed that man is a good Husband of his time, and lives to excellent purpoſe, and will at laſt come off with high Commendation, who hath got this done by that time He comes to die. A prepared Soul will be a praiſed Soul, *He ſhall have praiſe of God.*

As was ſaid even now under the former Head, this is difficult work, and ſuch, you know, goes very ſlowly off; our Hearts, though good in the main, are untoward knotty pieces, and whoſoever hath to deal with ſuch Timber had need labour with all his might; and when he doth ſo, he will find to his ſorrow it is but little he can diſpatch at a time. Holy *Paul* had been a great while at this work, and ſpent many Years about it, and believe it, he was no loiterer, he ſweat at it: He did, as he ſaith, keep under his Body, and bring it into Subjection, leſt He ſhould miſs of his end, and while he preached to others be himſelf a caſt-away;

away; and yet after theſe repeated and continued pains he tells us, 2 *Cor.* 5. 9. That he and the reſt of the Apoſtles did *labour*, i. e. they did not content themſelves with what they had done, and now give over, but they laboured ſtill, they went on to labour, and did follow it cloſe, if ſo be that after all that pains taken *they might whether preſent or abſent be accepted of him.* They did all of them well underſtand that they by their utmoſt endeavours could never make themſelves *perfect*, nor while they were here advance themſelves to a ſtate abſolutely compleat. *Job* long before had ſaid, *Job* 9. 30, 31. *Though I waſh my ſelf with Snow-water, and make my hands never ſo clean:* If I Glory in that, and reſt in that, *Thou ſhalt plunge me in the ditch, and mine own cloaths ſhall abhor me.* If I think my ſelf white as *Snow*, thou may'ſt count me *Mire* and Filth, and if my Cloaths had reaſon they would loath to come any more upon my back; this, I ſay, *Paul* and his Brethren knew as well as *Job*, that they could not make themſelves perfect, there would be ſome vacancies and defects for them to mourn and groan under, the higheſt of their ambition was to be found *accepted*, and bleſſed you if you be ſo.

And then you may adde this Conſideration further: That our Hearts are not only hard to be wrought upon, and brought into ſuch a condition, but it is as hard a matter to keep them in it when they are in it, in the World to

to come indeed there will be no changes, but in this there is little elſe; *there* will be a fixed and unalterable ſtate, the Saints made *pillars* in the Houſe of God; but *here* are Advances and Declenſions, bleſſed Progreſſes to Day, and miſerable Declenſions to Morrow, *Pſalm* 102. 10. *Thou haſt lifted me up, and caſt me down.* The Work will return upon us, and muſt be again and again repeated; what we have done at one time, we ſhall find a neceſſity of doing afreſh at another: becauſe there is not in us that fixation and conſiſtency which there ſhould be. It is with our Hearts, and Minds and Graces very much as it is with our Clocks, when they are drawn up in the Morning, the weights will immediately be going down again, and therefore there muſt be pulling of them up again at Night; or as it is with our Plate, when it is ſcour'd never ſo clean and bright, it will grow foul again, and contract new Ruſt and Canker. So, ah ſo, it is with the beſt of Saints, now their Hearts burn within them, anon they are Cold and Shivering, now Lively, anon Dull and Dead; now their Souls are like the Chariots of *Amminadab*, anon like thoſe of *Pharaoh*, when the Wheels were taken off. You read of the Wiſe Virgins, who were indued with Wiſdom from above, and they were well furniſhed, and had made a thorough Preparation ſuitable to the great deſign they were upon, having got Oil in their Veſſels, as well as Lamps in their Hands, and thoſe

thoſe Lamps were in very good caſe, lighted, and ſhining, and laſting, they did not go out as thoſe of the Fooliſh ones did; yet when there was that cry at Midnight, *Behold, the Bridegroom cometh*, they were off their Watch, found ſlumbering, and ſleeping, and were fain to ariſe and trim their Lamps again.

4. This Readineſs once attained will be the Comfort and Joy of your Hearts, the beginning of it will lay the Foundation of Comfort, the Progreſs in it will be the increaſing of that Comfort, and the compleating of the one will bring you to the perfection of the other; this will mightily prevail to the delivering of you from thoſe Fears and Tremblings, thoſe inward Anxieties and Heart-akings, which others who are ſtrangers to it, will be expoſed to, filled and tormented with, ſooner or later; when o hers are *Magor-Miſſabibs*, fear round about, you will have Peace, and increaſe your Joy in the Lord. When they are oppreſſed, overwhelmed, and even drown'd in deſpair, you will know how to lift up your Heads in a believing expectation of your Deliverance and Salvation drawing near; and when you can abide no longer in theſe earthly Tabernacles of your Bodies, they being grown ſo feeble and crazie, that they ſhake and totter, and muſt of neceſſity fall e're long, notwithſtanding you do in ſenſe of Duty all you can to prop them up and keep them in good repair, you will be able to poſſeſs your Souls not only in patience, but likewiſe

wiſe with gladneſs, becauſe your remove will be for the better, yea unſpeakably for your Advantage. I beſeech you, before you read any further, to pauſe a while, and ſeriouſly think, whether you muſt not in reaſon conclude that the *foolish Virgins* were put into a moſt dreadful Fright and Conſternation, when upon the tidings of the *Bridegrooms* coming their Lamps went out; they looked to their Lamps, and there was no light in them; they looked into their Veſſels, and there was no Oil in them; by which means they were altogether in the dark, and how great was that darkneſs! True Grace they had none, and as for their Profeſſion, which had formerly been very fair and taking, and had done them great ſervice among men, and acquired them much Credit and Reputation, that too did now fail them, and would contribute nothing at all to the anſwering of their occaſions: without all doubt, the going out of their Lamps did iſſue in the ſtriking of their Hearts and Hopes dead; what Pain muſt it needs put them to, when they thus thought with themſelves; we are not, ah, we are not ready! we have been Fools, arrant Fools for our Souls, deficient in our Preparations, we have not got what we ought to have got, the main and principal thing, the *Oil* is wanting, and now we are undone: the other Virgins would lend them none, for though through Mercy they had enough for themſelves, yet they had none to ſpare for others; and the *Bridegroom* would give

give them none: He had none for them, though he hath a redundancy, all fulneſs dwelling in him, but he had already given out all that he did from Eternity deſign to give; and now that which they once thought would have been the day of their higheſt preferment, proves the day of their Eternal Deſtruction.

The horrour of Poor Creatures muſt needs be exceeding great, when they ſee a neceſſity of dying, and that they are ready to launch into the Ocean of Eternity, and at that time look into themſelves, and can diſcover nothing but unpreparedneſs for ſo great a change, that they are not fit to dye, and therefore dare not die; they have not got Chriſt for their Saviour, nor Grace for their qualification, they have not minded what they were ſent about, not made their Calling and Election ſure, nor wrought out their Salvation, nor done any thing toward it; and therefore can find no Ground for Hope to ſet it's Foot upon. Then they look upon grim *Death*, and ſee it in extream haſte, void of all Patience and Compaſſion, looking with a ſtern and terrible countenance, with it's hand up, and it's Dart ready to give the mortal wound, it will not be intreated, nor bribed, it will not ſpare, it will not wait for them, not a week, not a day, no, not ſo much as an hour. As for the time that God hath given the Man, it was all fooliſhly loſt and miſpent, idled away, and ſinn'd away, and Death now hath no more time to

give him: No, no, come Sinner, come away, juſt as thou art thou muſt go, there is nothing left for thee to do here but to dye; and as I take thee and carry thee from hence, ſo Juſtice will find thee at the Tribunal, and what Sentence that will pronounce againſt you is plain, no other than that of Condemnation; thou livedſt a wicked, and wilt dye an accurſed Creature.

Whereas the ready and prepared Soul will enjoy a ſweet calm and ſerenity, ſatisfied from it ſelf, and dwell at eaſe and in goodneſs, *Pſal.* 37. 37. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace:* Whatever troubles he met with by the way, they are then all over, and done with, his bitter conflicts are turned into a glorious triumph. He can without any terror, look upon the King of terrors, and pleaſantly ſing his Soul out of the Body, as good old *Simeon* did, when he had the ever bleſſed Babe in his arms, and *Heaven* with all its glory and joy in his eye, *Luk.* 2. 29, 30. *Lord, now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation:* Let me go, Lord, let me go, I have ſtaid long enough here; I have got my freight, and would gladly ſet up my ſail; though I know Death will carry me to a place which with theſe eyes I never ſaw, yet I know that it is a place of deſires, where I ſhall ſee *God*, and meet with my deareſt *Saviour*, and be admitted into an intimate Communion with holy Angels,

Angels, and the Spirits of juſt men made perfect, and ſo have an undiſturbed reſt, and unſpeakable joy, with all fulneſs and ſatisfaction; the thoughts and aſſurance hereof will ſweetly influence both his Life and Death; ſo that he ſhall paſs his days with comfort, and end them like a Conquerour.

How familiarly, and with how much compoſedneſs of Mind did the Apoſtle *Peter* ſpeak of his dying, 2 *Pet.* 1. 14. *I muſt ſhortly put off this my Tabernacle, even as our Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath ſhewn me:* In which Words he refers to *John* 21. 18. *Where our Saviour had told him, when thou waſt Young, thou girdedſt thy ſelf, and walkedſt whither thou wouldſt, but when thou ſhalt be old, thou ſhalt ſtretch forth thy Hands, and another ſhall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldſt not; this ſpake He, ſignifying by what Death He ſhould glorifie God,* viz. A violent Death, that of the Croſs, a cruel ſhameful Death; well ſaith *Peter* here, Be it ſo, be it what Death it will that my Maſter hath deſigned for me; it is but the putting off this my Tabernacle. He looked upon it as being no other than a remove from one Houſe to another, from a crazy, leaky, weather-beaten and ruinous Tabernacle, to that Celeſtial, ſtately and glorious Palace, where there are many Manſions, and whither Jeſus the forerunner is entred for us, and hath prepared a place for me. It is but a remove to that place, which needs no repairs, knows no want of room,

conveniencies, nor delights, and from which I ſhall never remove: or he looked upon it as no other than an undreſſing of himſelf, and ſo it is as if he had ſaid, I am now quite weary and tired out, and e're it be long, my Lamp of Life will be extinguiſhed, and I ſhall then go to bed, to my Everlaſting and greatly deſired Reſt; Death, whatever it is to the Workers of Iniquity, will be to me no more than an ἀπόθεσις, a putting off, a ſhifting of my ſelf. It is, ſaith the learned *Grotius*, a Metaphor borrowed of Perſons that put off their Cloaths; my Soul hath for a great many Years liv'd in the World cloathed upon with a Garment of Fleſh; but now that Garment, as ſtrong and freſh and lovely as once it was, is waxen old, and grown thred-bare, and almoſt quite worn out, it will not ſerve me much longer; I muſt ſhortly put it off, and have a new ſuit. It is my Fathers will that it ſhould be ſo. I muſt make a bleſſed Exchange of theſe pitiful Raggs of Fleſh, for the Beautiful and Everlaſting Robes of Glory. He was no more concerned about it, knowing he ſhould be no loſer: This would be the beſt change that ever he had made, and the laſt change that ever he ſhould make, and this brings me to the laſt particular.

5. It is upon your Preparation and Readineſs for our Lords coming that your Everlaſting Welfare and Happineſs doth depend. Heaven is ready, Chriſt is gone thither to prepare

pare places for all his People; the Glory there is ready to Crown them, the Delight and Enjoyments there are ready to ſatisfie them; God, Chriſt, the Spirit, Angels and Saints are ready to receive and welcome them; and a prepared Heaven is for a prepared People, and for none but them. In *Mat.* 22. you read of a King, that made a Wedding Dinner for his Son, the occaſion was great, and without doubt the Proviſion was anſwerable. He ſent out his Servants firſt to invite Gueſts, and afterward to give notice to them. *I have prepared my Dinner, mine Oxen and Fatlings are killed, and all things are ready, come ye to the Marriage.* Many unworthily refuſed, but others came; think on it, my Friends, God will not want Company, if any of you will not accept of Goſpel Invitations, there are and ſhall be thoſe that will; but among thoſe that came, there was one found that was in an unprepared ſtate, not ready, he had not on a *Wedding-Garment.* He did not appear in a Garb ſuitable to ſuch a Preſence, and ſuch a Solemnity; but now conſider what became of him, was he accepted, was he admitted as one of the Company to a Participation of the Royal Dainties? No, far otherwiſe, inſtead of being received graciouſly, and entertained with Love, he was rejected with Scorn and Indignation, as one that had offered an affront to that Auguſt Aſſembly, and ſo was commanded to be taken away and caſt into utter darkneſs, where ſhall be

Weeping and Gnaſhing of Teeth; there will be no Gracious Reception without an Holy Preparation.

But then on the other ſide, thoſe that have made it their buſineſs to prepare for *Chriſt* and Heaven, ſhall have a moſt free admiſſion, and hearty welcome; as is evident from that Parable of the Virgins, in *Mat.* 25. *They that were ready*, went in to the Marriage; they did not ſtand without waiting, and begging, and pleading, as others did, but as ſoon as they came they went in, without more ado. Yea ſuch ſhall meet not only with an admiſſion, but with a large and abundant entrance: Such as will be according to their own Hearts deſire, and make for their Everlaſting Honour. Therefore doth the Apoſtle *Peter* adviſe Chriſtians to be daily upon the Progreſs and Improvement, making daily Addition to their Graces, *i. e.* one Grace to another in the acting and exerciſe of it, and one degree of Grace to another in a way of Spiritual growth and thrivingneſs, and to give diligence to make their Calling and Election ſure, and for their Quickening and Encouragement tells them, 2 *Pet.* 1. *If they do theſe things, they ſhall never fail*, i. e. You ſhall not fail of your end, nor miſs of thoſe things which you now have in your Eye, and are making out after the enjoyment of; you ſhall not ſo much as *ſeem to come ſhort* of the promiſed Reſt: and that is not all, for he goeth on thus. *So an entrance*

ſhal

ſhall be miniſtred unto you abundantly into the Everlaſting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. i. e. You ſhall go on your way with Strength, and go into the Kingdom with Triumph: Heaven Gate ſhall be ſet wide open for you, and this bleſſed *Paul* rejoyced in the full aſſurance of, as you may ſee, 2 *Tim.* 4. 6, 7, 8. *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at Hand.* That he ſpake as knowing that his Death made a near approach; well, ſaith He, this is my Comfort: *I have fought a good Fight, I have Finiſhed my Courſe, I have kept the Faith.* I have fought and not been a Coward, neither turn'd nor fled: I have run my Race notwithſtanding difficulties and diſcouragements, and am not now far from the Goal; and have been true to my Captain notwithſtanding all Enemies and Dangers; I have kept my poſt, and been faithful to my truſt; and now what remains! *From henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord the Righteous Judge will give me at that day.* He had done his Duty, fill'd up his Day and Place: He had liv'd anſwerably to his Profeſſion, and walked worthy of God and the Goſpel; and ſo He did not in the leaſt call in queſtion Gods goodneſs to him, or his faithfulneſs to his own Promiſe; No, no, ſaith He, I am ſure of the recompence of Reward, for which I have wrought, and to wear that immarceſſible Crown for which I did fight; and and having through the help of my God got into

into a gracious preparedneſs, I am not rack'd and tortur'd with the diſmal fears of an angry Rejection, but ſhall be at laſt received into Everlaſting Habitations, where I ſhall have the Joy of my Lord. I have now diſpatched the Doctrinal part, and proceed to the Improvement of the Point in a Way of

USE.

Uſe I. I ſhall direct my Diſcourſe unto thoſe fooliſh and Soul-undervaluing Perſons, who have ſpent much time in the World, but all that time have neglected this great buſineſs of getting themſelves into a Readineſs; there are too many ſuch up and down, who know their Maſters will in the caſe, but do it not; and art thou who readeſt theſe lines one of them? tell me, O Man, O Woman, haſt thou not often heard of the Death of others? haſt thou not every day news brought thee of ſuch an one, and ſuch an one that is gone into Eternity? Doſt thou not ſee thy Neighbours and Strangers carried one after another to their Graves, their little and long home? and haſt thou not been frequently told of thine own Death too, that ſuch a day will come as will be thy laſt? and haſt thou not alſo heard of Chriſts ſecond coming, with ten thouſands of his Saints to execute Judgment upon all, and that at his coming all ſhall be ſummoned and made to appear before his Tribunal, in order to the receiving from him their Sentence according to what they have done in the Body, whether it

it was good, or whether it was evil? and doſt thou believe theſe things? doſt thou ſlight theſe things as cunningly deviſed Fables, ſpread in all places for the keeping men in awe? or doſt thou look upon them as realities and the great Truths of God? doſt thou indeed aſſent to this, that Chriſt will come, and that thou muſt be judged, and put into an everlaſting ſtate either of Happineſs or of Miſery? If thou doſt aſſent hereunto, how doth that aſſent work? what influence hath it upon thy Heart and Life? what art thou the better for it?

Is it an unoperative Notion? haſt thou, notwithſtanding this Light which hath broken into thine underſtanding, all thy dayes lived in a total and ſupine neglect, more like a Brute than a Man or Woman indued with reaſon? as if Heaven, that is ſo full of joy and delight, were not worth the getting; and as if Hell, that is ſo full of miſery and torments, were not worth the avoiding; and as if your Souls, which are immortal and of ineſtimable value, were not worth the ſaving. You have been very buſie, careful and troubled about many things, of little concernment, and of ſhort duration, and have done nothing in order to the ſecuring of your ſelves from the Wrath to come: What, nothing towards the inſuring to your ſelves the bleſſedneſs and glory to come, and fitting your Souls for the enjoyment of it? I pity you greatly, and bewail your folly, and were it poſſible for me to do it,

it, I would willingly weep over you with tears of blood; and I do with greateſt earneſtneſs and importunity beſeech and intreat you to become ſerious, and bethink your ſelves before it is too late; if you go on thus, there will be bitterneſs in the latter end. Do not ſay, to morrow ſhall be as this day, and much more abundant; no, no, things will not laſt always as they are, the World is full of viciſſitudes and changes. Man is ſubject to diſſolution, and ſo are all ſublunary beings and contentments; the comforts of the Creature will certainly fail you, the lower ſprings dry up, and the pleaſures of ſin, how delicious ſo ever for the preſent to a wanton and diſtemper'd palate, are but for a ſeaſon; and when both the one and the other are ſpent and gone, what will you do? O! what will you do? where will you find a Pillow for an aking head, where a Cordial for a fainting heart? when you ſhall find that you have had in your life time all your good things, have received all your Conſolations, and there is none left, not ſo much as one ſingle drop more to be obtained, you will be filled with confuſion. Oh that I might prevail with you to ſhake off for a while that vanity of mind which doth ſo much poſſeſs you, and unman you, and lay to heart theſe three things:

Firſt, Not to labour induſtriouſly after Readineſs for your Lord's coming, is capable of no other interpretation than putting of an abominable

inable ſlight upon him; it is, whatever you ink., no leſs than affronting of him, it is a ractical telling him to his face that you have o regard for him; thou doſt that to the Lord f Glory which thou wouldſt not do to a man, hoſe favour is neceſſary for thee. You may ee what a charge was given the People againſt he Lord's appearing upon *Sinai*, *Exod.* 19. o, 11. *The Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Go unto the eople, and ſanctifie them to day and to morrow, and t them waſh their cloaths, and be ready againſt the hird day; for the third day the Lord will come own in the ſight of all the people upon mount Sinai:* Then he came down as a *Legiſlator*, to give ut the Law, and then was this care to be taken, to ſanctifie themſelves, and waſh their garments, to get rid of all filthineſs both of eſh and ſpirit: His next coming will be as a udge, to try and examine, and to put the Law in execution; and doth not this as loudly call upon us all for diligent preparation, and as thorough a ſanctifying of our ſelves as we can attain unto?

A wiſe and good Servant that knoweth his Maſter will come home, but cannot tell the preciſe time when, will get and keep all things in heir places, and ſuch an order, as that at his return he may be pleaſed. If you are acquainted with the purpoſe of a ſpecial Friend to give you a Viſit, or to lye in your Houſe, you will make every thing as neat and handſome as you can; and make ſuch Proviſion for him, as may evi-

evidence and expreſs to him that high valuation and reſpect you have for him; and what, is this thy kindneſs to the beſt Friend that ever the Children of Men had? is this the reſpect thou haſt for the *Lord* of life and glory? that though thou art aſcertain'd of his coming, and oughteſt to live in the daily expectation of it, yet thou never mindeſt it, nor concerneſt thy ſelf about it; thou haſt other things to mind, that ingroſs all thy time, and thoughts, and cares; thou eagerly purſueſt the World, and ſtudieſt the gratifying of thy baſe luſts and ſenſual appetite; thou goeſt on in the vanity of thy mind, committing uncleanneſs with greedineſs; but never mindeſt nor ſetteſt thy ſelf about getting into ſuch a gracious and holy frame, as that thou mayeſt be accepted of him. Now this is an evident and plain demonſtration that he is deſpiſed in thine Eyes, that he hath no intereſt in thine Heart, no room in thy Affections one way or another; my meaning is, thou doſt neither love him for his goodneſs, nor fear him for his greatneſs, and ſo it is all one to thee whether he be pleaſed or offended; this ſpeaks thee ſuch an one as that ſlothful and wicked ſervant, who knew what manner of Man his Maſter was, and yet took no care about that buſineſs with which by him he had been intruſted with, but inſtead of trading with his talent, buried it in a Napkin; and what do you think will be the iſſue of ſuch a ſpirit and carriage?

Secondly,

Secondly, I ſhall inform you as to that; Chriſt will pay you in your own kind, he loves to deal with men as he is dealt with by them; what meaſure they mete to him ſhall be meted to them again; this you find expreſly laid down in Scripture, *Pſal.* 18. 25, 26. *With the merciful thou wilt ſhew thy ſelf merciful, with an upright man thou wilt ſhew thy ſelf upright, with the pure thou wilt ſhew thy ſelf pure, and with the froward thou wilt ſhew thy ſelf froward:* And the like you meet with in *Prov.* 1. 24. *I have call'd and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded*; therefore, *Ver.* 27, 28. *When your fear cometh as deſolation, and your deſtruction cometh as a whirl-wind; when diſtreſs and anguiſh cometh upon you, then they ſhall call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me:* He is reſolved to be even with Sinners.

Thus he will do in the preſent Caſe: You, as I have ſaid, ſlight him, and he will as much ſlight you; he will give you ſlight for ſlight, and when he doth, ſee what you will get by it. This is it that the Lord hath ſaid, 1 *Sam.* 2. 30. *They that honour me, I will honour:* I my ſelf will do it, they ſhall be precious in mine eyes; I will have an high eſteem for them, and put a glory upon them; and what ſhall be done to the man whom the King of Heaven delights to honour? would you know? ſtay 'till you come to Heaven, and there you ſhall ſee, and ſeeing admire: *But they that de-*

ſpiſe

ſpiſe me, ſhall be lightly eſteemed; *i. e.* by me, and by others too. Saints are Men of honour, they are conſiderable Perſons, God counts them ſo; witneſs that ſaying of his to *Satan* concerning *Job*, in *Job* 1. 8. and again in *Job* 2. 3. *Haſt thou conſidered my ſervant Job?* he is a godly man, he is eminent for his godlineſs; for the frame of his ſpirit, he feareth me; and for the management of his life, he eſchew-eth evil; for theſe excellent qualifications he is very conſiderable in mine eyes; he is one of my Jewels, my Darling: but thoſe that de-ſpiſe him, ſhall be lightly eſteemed by God; he will count them chaffy Perſons, and put them away as droſs, and he will expoſe them to the ſcorn of others; he will pour contempt upon them, the whole Hoſt of Heaven, all the Angels and Saints there ſhall eſteem lightly of them.

This is the way in which God will revenge himſelf on ſuch Perſons as theſe, and it is a righteous way, but as dreadful as it is righte-ous: If God be little in your eyes, you ſhall be vile and abominable in his; if you do not prepare for his coming, as for the coming of the Lord of Glory, he will reject you as the off-ſcouring and dung of the Earth; would you have an inſtance hereof? you meet with it in his Carriage toward the fooliſh Virgins, they were deſpiſers of *Chriſt*, and ſo wofully heedleſs in that which referr'd to him; they conſidered not what a great work they had under-

undertaken the doing of, nor what a Glorious *Lord* and Bridegroom they were going to attend upon, and accordingly were negligent and careleſs in their preparations, doing their work by halves, and not taking that with them, which above all other things was required: Now obſerve how he dealt with them according to their folly, what a ſlight he put upon their Perſons, the Door of the Bride-Chamber was ſhut againſt them; to others he opened it, and moſt lovingly took them in, but he ſhut it againſt theſe, and would not ſuffer them ſo much as to ſet their Foot over the Threſhold; there was a ſlight indeed, and he did as much ſlight their Suit and Petition, they ſtood without, and begg'd hard, Lord, Lord, open to us; but he would not yield to their intreaty, ſhutting out their Prayers as well as their Perſons: Be gone, ſaith he, be gone, I will have nothing to do with you in a way of Kindneſs and Mercy; and he will as much ſlight their Pleas as their Perſons and Prayers. This they will find of whom our Saviour ſpeaks, *Mat.* 7. 22, 23. *Many will ſay unto me in that day*: What will they ſay? That which they will count a very ſtrong Argument, but Chriſt will ſlight it as weak and unable to carry the Cauſe: *Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name caſt out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful works?* But now obſerve how Chriſt ſlighted this: He took no notice at all of it; He would not ſpeak a word by way of

anſwer, only commanded them to be packing. *Then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work Iniquity.* I do not know you: You did not care to begin your Acquaintance with me before; and I do not care to begin my Acquaintance with you now, but will ſtand at an everlaſting diſtance from you, and will have nothing to do with you. Hereby you plainly ſee, that theſe were lightly eſteemed, and ſo will you, if that you be not wiſer: God will care as little for Sinners then, as they do for him now.

3. If at that day either of your Death or your Reſurrection, you be not found ready for your Lords coming, you will be found ready and ripe for your own eternal ruine; if not fit to be gathered for Heaven, then fit to drop into Hell; if not fit to be reaped as Gods Corn for his Garner, then to be cut down as Weeds or Tares, and caſt into the fire; if he do not find you ready to receive him, and that ſuitably to his Greatneſs and Excellency, you will find him ready to reject and caſt you off for ever; for then the work will be ſoon diſpatch't and cut ſhort in Righteouſneſs, it will be preſently done; either ſo or ſo, either admitted or baniſhed, if you are not in ſuch a caſe as to be the beloved and delight of his Soul, you will be the abhorred and loathed of his Soul. Chooſe now which of the two you would be, for one of them you muſt be: If you look into *Rom.* 9. 22, and 23. you will find the Apoſtle there

there comparing Men to Veſſels, all made of Clay, and for ſeveral uſes; there are in an Houſe Veſſels of honour and Veſſels of diſhonour, ſome for noble uſe, and ſome for ſordid. So it is among Men, ſome are *Veſſels of Wrath*, to be filled up to the brim with the Wrath and Fury of God, Veſſels fitted for deſtruction, as fit for Death and Damnation as one thing can be fitted for another; others are *Veſſels of Mercy*, which are afore prepared unto Glory. Now all the World will be divided into theſe two ſorts, one of them you will be found to be, when you come to be ſearched; if you be not Veſſels of Mercy prepared for Glory, then Veſſels of Wrath, Objects of Wrath, to be filled with Wrath, fitted for deſtruction; if you be not found Timber fit for the Building, then you muſt be fuel for the Burning; if you be not fit for *Chriſt* and Heaven, you will be fit for the Devil and Hell, and every one ſhall be ſent to that place which they are fit for; none ſhall be ſhut out of Heaven that is fit for it, and none ſhall be ſhut down into Hell but thoſe that are fit for it; yea, ſo fit for Hell, that they are fit for no place elſe; and you ſhall have that aſſign'd and given to you which is fit for you; for in the Acts of Juſtice and Mercy, God acts with Infinite Wiſdom, ſuiting rewards exactly to the Perſons upon whom he doth beſtow them. Therefore I beſeech you to be wiſe now, and betimes conſider what you have to do, leſt

ye befool and curſe your ſelves, when it is too late to help your ſelves.

II. *USE.* I now proceed to the ſecond Uſe of the point, which will ſpeak to you in a way of ſerious and earneſt Exhortation; and that which I ſhall exhort to, is onely that you would put in practice that excellent Counſel which He, whoſe Name is *Counſellor*, and who is the Wiſdom as well as the Power of God, gives you in the Text, *Be ye ready.* You have heard that the *Lord* will come, for certain he will: Oh! prepare for his coming, and get your ſelves into ſuch a ſtate and frame as that you may be neither afraid of him, nor an offence to him; but that he may appear to your Joy, and you to his, that as the *Bridegroom* rejoyceth over the *Bride*, ſo he may rejoyce over you, and you again may rejoyce in him, and increaſe your Joy, ſo as to have it full. A meeting between him and you there muſt be, for before him will be gathered all Nations, and every individual Perſon of every Nation: now that which I drive at, is, that it might be a comfortable meeting, that you may meet as Friends, with ſmiles and embraces, ſo meet as never to part more, ſo meet with him as to be taken up by him into everlaſting Habitations. I would have you mind this thing, as thoſe that are throughly convinced of what great and near concernment it is to you, and two things I would preſs upon you. 1. Uſe

1. Uſe utmoſt diligence; whatever your hand findeth to do in order hereunto, do it with all your might, conſidering with your ſelves what a great deal of care and pains many among you take for the dreſſing and adorning of your Bodies: Do not your Conſciences tell you, that you ſpend more time at your Glaſs in a Morning, than you do all the day (it may be, all the week) with God, or upon your precious Bibles? and how curious and exact are you about it! And what help do you call in for it, there muſt not be a pin ſtuck amiſs, nor an hair ſet or laid amiſs, but every thing in its right place and order: And I pray when you have run out a great part of the Morning about this work, and are as fine as hands can make you, ſit down one little while, and think thus with your ſelves. O my Soul, what is that I have been doing, that I have now ſpent ſo much time about? what is it that I do thus carefully tend and look after? Is it not a piece of Clay, the Beauty whereof is but skin deep? Is it not a piece of vileneſs, which within a few years will fade, decay, and be ſhrivled up into a meer pack of Wrinkles? and after that, if not before, turn to putrefaction and rottenneſs? Entertain your ſelves now and then with ſuch thoughts as theſe, and ſee how they will work upon you, and whether they will not do you a great deal more good than all thoſe vain, fooliſh, impertinent thoughts which you hugg and cheriſh, and often repeat;

let me tell you, ye young Gallants, as proud and conceited as you are of your ſelves now, and as comely and amiable pieces as you think your Bodies to be, pure white and red, of admirable features and due proportion, it will not be long e're Age will dig furrows in your Cheeks, and Death cover you with a diſmal paleneſs, and your Acquaintance will firſt grieve and then loath to look upon you; yea your deareſt Friends who now delight in your converſe, and love the very ground you go upon, will not endure to have you in their Houſe, but think the dark and lonely Grave the onely place convenient for your abode. *Sarah* had been a very fair and beautiful Woman, but when ſhe was once dead, *Abraham*, her dear and tender Husband, would have her buried out of his ſight: Now ſince it is thus, the advice which I give you is, that though you beſtow upon your Bodies what is fit, for there is a Duty which you owe to them, and it muſt be performed, you ought not to be cruel to them, nor careleſs of them, yet do not give them more than their due; let not them go away with all the tendance, but let your precious Souls come in for a ſhare with them, yea, let them have the greateſt ſhare, let them be your Darlings: So holy *David* called his; go and every day ſpend ſome time in dreſſing of them, in waſhing off the filth and pollution that is upon them, in getting more and more of a Spiritual Beauty upon them, that ſo you may

may be found to praiſe, honour, and glory in the day of our Lords Appearance, that his heart may be raviſhed with one of our Eyes, with one Chain of your Neck, with the ſight of your Glory and Excellency, cauſed by the putting of his own comelineſs upon you, and ſo his Soul may make him like unto the Chariots of *Aminadib*; to this purpoſe, you muſt, I ſay, take pains.

2. I do adviſe you not only to be diligent herein, but what you do, do it quickly: Delays are Dangerous, and they are very unreaſonable, and very miſchievous, they have undone and ruined many, and they have griev'd many. Oh that you would learn Wiſdom by their harms; it is a Mercy that you have a day, be not ſo unwiſe as to loſe it, becauſe it is precious; and you do not know that you ſhall have a ſecond: Let this be on your part, the accepted time, and it will be worth the accepting; for then it will be the day of your Salvation; and tell me if you can, why you ſhould put off ſo great a work. Let me here propound only two queſtions to you, and do you anſwer them if you can.

1. Do you think it is too ſoon to begin this work of Preparation? You plainly ſee by the early Deaths of ſome, who are cut down while they are flouriſhing, in their Childhood, Youth and Strength; while their bones are full of Marrow, and their Breaſts of milk, and by the ſudden Death of others, who are taken

off without warning; well and dead in an hour, conſumed and knocked down in the ſtreet with an unexpected blow from an inviſible hand: I ſay, by this you plainly ſee that it is not too ſoon; if it be not too ſoon to die, then it is not too ſoon to get fit for death.

2. Again, let me ask you, is there any other, any greater, any more important and neceſſary work incumbent upon you, which you are in wiſdom and love to your ſelves obliged to diſpatch firſt? Is there any thing that doth more deſerve your Attendance, Thoughts, Care and Pains? Is there any thing in which you are more concerned? I am of the mind there is not; ſurely you cannot upon ſtricteſt ſearch and enquiry find any thing in the World comparable to this, *viz.* To pleaſe God, and to ſecure his Favour and his Glory to your ſelves for ever. I know what the Counſel of Chriſt is, and what that Method which he would have you obſerve: You may read it in *Mat.* 6. 33. *Seek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs.* Seek ye theſe things, ſaith *Chriſt*, they are worth your ſeeking: If you do not ſeek them, you will loſe and miſs of them? I will do it, ſaith the Sinner, but I muſt take time for it: There are ſome other things to be done firſt. There are pleaſures to take, and an Eſtate to get, and a Family to provide for; and when that is done, I will look out after God's Kingdom and Righteouſneſs: But ſtay, man, that is prepoſterous and diſorderly: *Seek firſt*

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the Kingdom of God: Be ſure that you give unto God and Chriſt, Heaven and Glory, the preference; whatever you do, let God be firſt ſerved, and the Soul firſt provided for, and Heaven firſt ſecured: This is their due, they do deſerve it: The beſt ſhould be minded firſt.

What think you, my Friends, of that which hath been ſaid? Are you convinced of the reaſonableneſs of the propoſal? Are you inclining to put the Counſel in practice? Are you more than almoſt perſwaded? The Great God who hath the Hearts of Men in his hand, and turneth them as the Rivers of Water, that *God* who perſwadeth *Jacob* to dwell in the Tents of *Shem*, ſpeak with a ſtrong hand in order to the perſwading of you for your own everlaſting good, and as a worker together with him, I do in the Bowels of Love intreat all to whom this Sermon was preached, or this little piece ſhall come, ſet upon this great and good work, there muſt be a beginning. Oh begin now: God ſaith to day; be you of the ſame mind, and ſay ſo too.

Know, it is good doing it in the Morning; you waſh your faces and hands, and put on your Cloaths, and dreſs your ſelves in the Morning, and think you are not your ſelves till that be done, unleſs it be ſuch Sluggards as lie in bed till noon. I pray do as much for your Souls: It is too too often ſeen, if that a Duty, as Family Prayer, be put off, and the Morning-Seaſon be ſlipt, Friends come knock-

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ing at the door, and worldly buſineſs crouds in ſo faſt upon you, that another Opportunity doth not offer it ſelf, and ſo the Duty for that Day is neglected, God loſeth his ſervice and honour, and you the comfort and advantage: So it may be in the preſent caſe, if you loſe the Morning of your Age, your Hearts may contract that hardneſs, your ſins may get that ſtrength, and you may be ſo immers'd and drowned in the World, that this work may be wholly laid aſide, and never done, or if done at all, then with much greater difficulty than it may at preſent.

And further know, it is now high time with many of you, yea high time. It is grown very late, the Almond-tree Bloſſoms, and the Shadows of the Evening are upon you, you have but one day allowed you for this, and this day is with you far ſpent, but few, very few Sands are left in your Glaſs, and that God who will not always, hath already waited a long time upon you. Go therefore, dear Souls, and laying other things aſide, go dreſs you: But you will ſay, what directions will you give us? What is it that you would have us to do in order to the getting our ſelves ready for the coming of our Lord? By way of Anſwer to this ſerious and weighty Queſtion, I ſhall deſire you to conſider the manner of his coming, and the End for which, and then do you wiſely improve that Conſideration, and act accordingly. Here I ſhall onely tell you, that Chriſt

Chriſt will come under a double Notion, and for a double End.

1. As a Bridegroom.
2. As a Lord or Houſholder.

1. *Firſt*, Chriſt will come as a Bridegroom. The time of this Life is the time of *Wooing*; ſuch is the condeſcending Grace and Kindneſs of Chriſt, that though He be the Lord of Life and Glory, and thought it no Robberry to be equal with God, yet He hath been pleaſed to ſet his Heart upon many of the Children of Men, even all thoſe that his Father had given him, and he hath been to many in all Generations, and is to others in this, an earneſt Suitor: how phathetical his Intreaties, and how large his offers, and all that he may gain their good Will, their Hearts and Loves for himſelf! *Prov.* 23.26. *My Son give me thine Heart*; and it is very much that he doth for the winning and gaining of them. He unſpeakably outbids Sin, World and Devil, who are his Rivals and Competitors: In this Life alſo is the day of *Eſpouſals*. So *Paul* ſpeaks, 2 *Corinth.* 11. 2. *I have eſpouſed you to one Husband:* This is done at the day of Converſion and Regeneration, when a Perſon having had a ſight of his Beauty and Excellency, and it's Will bowed, and Affections drawn out, accepts of him, cloſeth with him, and gives up it ſelf to him in an everlaſting Covenant: Here is the Contract made, *Ezek.* 16. 8. *Thy time was the time of Love, and I ſpread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedneſs*

neſs, yea, I ſware unto thee, and entred into Covevenant with thee, ſaith the Lord God, and thou becameſt mine. Both theſe are the bleſſed tranſactions of this Life.

Now when Chriſt ſhall come again, He will appear in Pomp and Majeſtick ſtate, as a bleſſed and glorious Bridegroom, to finiſh and conſummate the buſineſs. Then he will fetch his Love home, as in *Cant.* 8. 2. the Spouſe ſpeaks of leading Chriſt, and bringing him *into her mothers houſe.* At his return he will lead his Church and particular Saints, and bring both her and them *into his Fathers houſe.* When particular Saints are ready, he comes by Death for them; and when the whole Church is ready, he will come in Perſon for her; as we formerly ſaid, *Rev.* 19. 7. *Let us be glad and rejoice in him, for the marriage of the lamb is come, and his wife hath made her ſelf ready.* The day of Chriſt's coming will be the Wedding-day, then is the Morning-dawn thereof, and a long day it will be, as long as Eternity; a day that will know no end, and yet no wearineſs; there ſhall be nothing in it but unmixed and perfect joy and delight. But now the Queſtion will be, What is to be done by every one of us, in order to our getting ready for this bleſſed Bridegroom, that ſo we might rejoice in and at his coming as ſuch. To this I ſhall give you my Anſwer in theſe Three Particulars.

1. *Firſt*, Make ſure of this, that you have cordially Accepted of him, and that upon his own

own terms, as he hath offered himſelf to you in the Goſpel; and that you have indeed ſet your hearts upon him; that the Goſpel hath not been preached to you in vain; that the Spirit of God in Ordinances hath not moved upon you in vain; that Miniſters, who are Chriſt's *Paranymphs*, the Friends of this Bridegroom, have not pleaded his Cauſe with you in vain, but that as he hath been tendred to you, ſo he hath been received by you. Oh conſider what a dreadful condition will thoſe be then in, concerning whom Chriſt ſhall then ſay, as you have it, *Luk.* 19. 27. *Thoſe mine Enemies which would not that I ſhould reign over them, bring hither, and ſlay them before me.* My Father ſet me up for King upon his holy Hill of *Sion*; He laid the Government upon my Shoulder, and put the Scepter into my hand; but theſe would not bow to my Government; they had rather draw in the Devil's Yoke, than be rul'd by my Law; now ſlay them before me, that their death may be my delight; ſince they would not live my Subjects, let them die as mine Enemies.

And will it not be the ſame caſe, as dreadful with thoſe concerning whom he ſhall then ſay, Bring hither thoſe unworthy and ingrateful Wretches, whom I wooed, but could never win? To whom I did offer my ſelf, but they would none of me; they did not like the holineſs of my Will, nor the ſtrictneſs of my Ways; nor could they find in their hearts to take up my Croſs, it was too heavy and pinching for

their

their fair and tender Necks. I would indeed have given my ſelf to them, with my Righteouſneſs, Grace and Peace, my Kingdom and Glory; but they had other Lovers, unto whom they cleaved; they would not have their Covenant with Death broken, nor their Agreement with Hell; they rather choſe to ſet their hearts upon their Iniquities, and upon the lying vanities of the World, than upon Me; they could ſee no beauty nor comelineſs in me, for which I ſhould be deſired. Now bring them hither. Now, that the World is at an end, and Sin hath left them nothing but its ſting. Now, that they have ſeen an end of all earthly Perfections, and are left in miſery by all thoſe upon whom they ſo fooliſhly doated: Now bring them hither, to ſee my Greatneſs and Glory, and to ſee how I uſe them who received me, what Honour I put upon them, to what Preferment and Happineſs I do advance them; and then after they have had a ſhort ſight thereof, I will ſend them packing; and ſince they would not make me the Object of their deareſt Love, I will make them the Objects of my eternal Scorn and Indignation.

Come then, O poor Soul, conſider and mind in this your day the things that do belong unto your peace, that they may not be for ever hidden from your eyes. Know when you are well offered, and now make up the Match: Why ſhould you not accept this moſt precious Jeſus, who is worthy of all acceptation? If you do,

do, he will moſt graciouſly accept of you at laſt, and freely own you before his Father, Angels and Men. If you are then able to ſay, Lord, I did hear moſt glorious reports made of thee by thy Miniſters, and I did believe thoſe reports. I had through Grace mine eyes opened, and did ſee in thee ſuch incomparable beauty and excellency, that I was enamoured on thee, and preferr'd thee before all the World, and gave up my ſelf to thee in an everlaſting Covenant; you ſhall not need to fear appearing before him; your old love ſhall never be forgotten; if you have now choſen him, you ſhall be ſure to have your choice. He hates putting away, and ſince nothing here could ſeparate him from your love, nothing here nor hereafter ſhall be able to ſeparate you from his love.

2. *Secondly*, Having made choice of him, look to it that you be faithful to him, and ſtedfaſt with him; you know how the Require and the Promiſe are connected and knit together, *Rev.* 2. 10. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* Where there is not Conſtancy, it is a vain thing for any one to expect a Crown. He having loved his own, loved them to the end; neither their Unkindneſs to him, nor his bitter Sufferings for them, could make him give over loving them, or abate any thing of it. They now that place their love upon him, muſt write after ſo fair a Copy, and love him alſo to the end. The truth is, thoſe that have once ſeen cauſe enough to

love

love him, will never ſee any to change their minds; the more they grow up into an acquaintance with him, the more Attractives they will diſcover, and the more Fuel to feed that holy Flame.

There are indeed Two ſorts of Perſons that he will for ever account unworthy of him. The Firſt is, all thoſe who profeſs high, and talk great things of the kindneſs they have for him; but it is no more than Talk; they are meer Cheats and Counterfeits; they have love for themſelves, ſuch as it is, and for the World, for Eaſe and ſenſual Pleaſures, but none for Chriſt; they give him the Lip, but things below have their Hearts. The other is of thoſe who follow him for a time, but it is only for a time, a little way, and a little while; they do not fulfill to follow him. When a time of Trial and Temptation comes, they are offended and leave him, and turn aſide to crooked Paths with the Workers of Iniquity. Now neither of theſe are ready and fit to appear before him either at Death or at Judgment. For how can the former Anſwer for their baſe Hypocriſie and Diſſimulation? The Scripture tells us, That *he will not be mocked.* He will not be put off with a company of vain Words, and empty Shews; and how ſhall the other anſwer to him, for their dealing falſely in his Covenant? for their treacherous Apoſtacy and Backſliding, ſince they have by their departure and drawing back been a reproach to him, and crucified

cified him a-freſh, and put him to an open ſhame. By their doing ſo, they have as good as told the World, that he diſappointed them; that they did not find that in him which they expected; that neither his Company, nor his Services, neither the Comforts he gave, nor the Promiſes he made, were deſirable; but they therefore left him, becauſe they knew how to better themſelves and their condition, by going elſewhere. Thoſe that deal thus with him, his Soul will have no pleaſure in, *i. e.* he will hate and loath them, and certainly they deſerve it at his hand.

As for you who deſire to find Mercy at the Day of Chriſt, beg and pray hard, that you may find mercy now, ſo as to be faithful. Love ye the Lord Jeſus in ſincerity, and go on ſo to do; *Joh.* 15.9. *As the Father hath loved me, ſo have I loved you; continue ye in my love.* Have a care that you do not cool my love to you, nor quench it, nor by any wilful ſin of yours loſe it; and do you alſo continue to love me, never ſuffer that fire to go out upon the Altar of your Souls. Inſtead of abating your love to him, you ſhould increaſe it till you come to be all love. None but Virgins are fit to go out to meet this glorious Bridegroom, ſuch as have made it their hearty deſire and care to keep themſelves pure, and in ſome good meaſure unſpotted of the World; ſuch as have not proſtituted and given themſelves up to leud Embraces, ſuch as have kept their Conſciences

void of offence, and ſhall be preſerved as chaſte Virgins at the laſt. And then,

3. *Thirdly*, Having accepted of him, and being faithful to him, ſtudy ſo to carry in the World, as that he may not be aſhamed of you, but have honour and credit by you in the World. Do not go in a ſordid Dreſs, and live like thoſe that are carnal Men; go up and down in your beautiful Garments, cloathed with the Sun, like the *King's Daughter* mentioned *Pſal.* 45. 13. who is ſaid to be *all glorious within, and her raiment of wrought gold.* Put on Chriſt himſelf, put on his Spirit, and Diſpoſition, and Graces. He cannot but be pleaſed greatly with you, when he ſees himſelf in you, and his Image upon you. He will count your Beauty perfect, where he ſees his own Comlineſs put upon you: And do not content your ſelves with having a little Grace, but make a good improvement and progreſs in it; preſs after larger meaſures, and higher degrees, get as much as you can, labour to compleat, pray that ye may be ſtrengthned with all might by the Spirit in the inward Man, and filled with all the fulneſs of God. Though the leaſt Grace, if it be true, is a good evidence of a Perſon's Intereſt in Chriſt, and of his Title to Heaven, and the Glory thereof, yet it doth not amount to an abſolute fitneſs for the preſent actual enjoyment of Heaven and that Glory; as you know a Child is born Heir to an Eſtate, and to a Crown, but he muſt grow up to maturity before

fore he is in a capacity of poſſeſſing the Eſtate, and ſwaying the Sceptre: So it is here; we read of being *made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in light*, Col. 1. 12. As they have from God a Right to it, ſo a Fitneſs for it too. Now you ought to preſs after ſuch a degree of Grace, as will amount to this meetneſs. Get ripe for glory, fill'd with that fulneſs of God which is appointed for you by the Way, that you may be fit for that fulneſs of God which is deſigned to you in the Countrey, and ſo go both to the Grave, and to Heaven, as *a ſhock of corn in its ſeaſon*. You know we did before make uſe of that paſſage of *Peter*, where he ſpeaks of their making their Calling and Election ſure, and of Graces both being and abounding in them; and tells them, if they do but take care for the doing of thoſe two things, there would be an Entrance miniſtred unto them abundantly into the glorious Kingdom of their God and Saviour. An abundance of Grace in the Heart, is the way to have an abundant Entrance into the Kingdom. Thus you are to prepare for the coming of Chriſt, as a glorious Bridegroom.

2. The Lord Jeſus Chriſt will come as a Lord, Owner or Proprietor, to call in his own, and to reckon with thoſe that he hath imployed and intruſted. He comes as the Owner of a Field, to ſee what ſtate it is in, what it brings forth, what he can find that will anſwer the pains he hath taken, and the

coſt he hath been at. Death is his Sickle with which he cuts Men down; look you to it, that you be not Tares nor Weeds, that have liv'd and thriven, and are good for nothing, and therefore ſhall be caſt as Fuel into the Fire; but that you be good Corn, ſome of God's Wheat, as the holy Father called himſelf, that when it is reaped, ſhall be taken and laid up in the Garner of Glory.

He is the great Shepheard of the Sheep, that now takes a tender care of them, leads them into green Paſtures, and by ſtill Waters; cauſes them to reſt at Noon; heals the Sick, and reduceth the Wandering; carrieth the Lambs in his Arms, and gently leads them that are with Young; and under this Notion he will come at laſt, to gather them all together. Here is a ſcattering time, and too too often the Scatterings are exceeding great, ſometimes through unbrotherly Contentions and needleſs Diviſions, ſometimes through hot and furious Perſecutions; but when Chriſt cometh again, there ſhall be a bleſſed gathering time; they ſhall be all of them brought together, and that into an Oneneſs, and they ſhall be carried into the Fold of Glory. Now then ſee you to it, that you be not Wolves in Sheeps-cloathing, ſuch as have nothing of a Saint but the outſide, nothing of his Nature and Diſpoſition; ſuch as have the Child's Coat, but the Devil's Spirit. See that you be not ſtinking Goats, that ſmell rank of Sin and Profaneneſs; nor filthy Swine, that com-

commit Uncleanneſs with greedineſs, and wallow in the mire of all Abominations; but that you be ſome of ſuch as have his Mark, I mean, have been made Partakers of his Spirit; for if any Man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his. See that you know his Voice, and follow him, the counſels of his Word, the conduct and motions of his Grace.

Once more, Chriſt is a great Houſholder, who is gone a long Journey into a far Countrey; from his lower Houſe on Earth, to the upper Houſe of Heaven. Here he hath left a Family, and in that Servants, to whom he hath committed a Truſt. As ſuch he will come again, to take an account of things, and ſee the ſtate of his Family, and to reckon with his Servants. He will deal with them all, one by one, ſtrictly enquiring how they have behaved themſelves during his abſence; whether they have not lived in his fear, though they have not been in his preſence; whether they have filled up their ſeveral places, and performed the duty of thoſe relations in which they ſtand to him, and one to another; whether they have lived in love, and been mutually helpful, and ſtudiouſly contributed to the good of the whole; or whether any of them have begun to ſmite their Fellow-ſervants, been quarelſom and contentious, or looſe and profane, eating and drinking with the Drunken, and by thoſe means breaking the Peace of the Houſe, and bringing upon it a bad Report. In a word, he

will then know, what reſpect they have had to the Orders he left them, how they have obeyed and conformed themſelves to his Laws and Rules, and how they have ſpent their time, and laid out themſelves for the promoting of his Intereſt. And here again the Queſtion returns, How ſhall we prepare our ſelves, and get into ſuch a readineſs for him, as that at his coming he may commend us for having been good and faithful Servants, faithful in our Little, true to our Truſt, careful of our Buſineſs, and thereupon make us Rulers over many things, give us an Advance and Preferment, and receive us into his Joy, remove us out of the place and capacity of Servants, to the dignity and honour of Sons and Daughters of God? Unto this I ſhall again return Anſwer in theſe Three things alſo.

1. Be ſure that you be not idle, ſuffer not your precious time and golden hours to run out to waſte, but trade with your Talents; for I doubt not but you all know, there is not any one of you but hath a Truſt committed to him; there is not a Man that can ſay, he therefore lives and doth nothing, becauſe he hath nothing to do. The Life which you have, the Knowledge, Gifts, Parts that you have, the Eſtate, Intereſt, Power you have, be it greater or leſs, are ſo many Talents, and God expects ſomething for himſelf, and that every one of you ſhould by every one of theſe bring ſomething into the Revenue of his Glory. As he

he made, ſo he gives out all things for himſelf. It muſt be granted, that all Men have not alike, the ſame Power is not concredited to every Perſon, all Stars are not placed in the ſame Orb, nor all Chriſtians in the ſame Sphere of Activity, nor are God's Expectations alike from all. In the Parable of the Talents, you find one Servant had *five* put into his hand, another but *two*, and a third but *one*; ſome had more, and ſome had leſs, but every one had ſome. And as it was with them, ſo it is with you, and with all in all places; there is not a Perſon endued with Reaſon, not the meaneſt, not the weakeſt, not thoſe that are ſet in the loweſt Place, and furniſhed with moſt deſpicable Gifts, but he hath one Talent, there is ſomething he may do for God. Now that Talent is not to be neglected, not to lye dead upon your hands. It is not to be embezill'd nor ſquandred away; you muſt not ſerve Sin with the ſtrength that God gives you, nor feed it at his Coſt, nor with his merciful Allowances and great Kindneſs make proviſion for the Fleſh to fulfill it in the Luſts thereof: This *God* complained of, *Hoſ.* 2. 8. *She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her Silver and Gold which ſhe prepared for Baal.* *Iſrael* had all from God, and beſtowed it upon an Idol: A very holy Man hath this paſſage in his Expoſition of this place; *This is as if a Bird ſhould be ſhot with an Arrow, whoſe Feathers were taken out of her own Body.* How

dare any employ their Eſtates againſt God? Yet how great is the number of them that do, uſing their Eſtates to drunkenneſs and exceſs, their Wit and Parts to mock at Godlineſs, their Authority and Power to ſuppreſs Religion? The guilt of thus abuſing the Talent God hath intruſted them with, will, except Repentance intervene, lye heavy upon them one day, as a Talent of Lead, and ſink them into Deſtruction.

Nor muſt you hide your Talents in a Napkin, *i.e.* bury them in ſloath and idleneſs: It is not for you to ſuffer your time to run out to waſte. God doth not give you Sun-light and Candle-light to ſleep by, and Game by; Cards are none of God's, but the Scriptures, and in them ſhould you meditate day and night. Nor is it for you to let your Parts and Gifts ruſt for want of a right uſe, but know, ſtudy and conſider what is God's End in beſtowing theſe things upon you, and comply with him therein. What your Conſciences tell you is God's End, do you make it your End too, and employ all you are and have for the attaining of it; trade with all wiſely and diligently, lay out all for the glory of Jeſus Chriſt, and the intereſt, credit and promoting of the Goſpel. How much comfort and boldneſs muſt you needs think it miniſtred unto holy *Paul*, that he could ſay, *Phil.* 1. 21. *That to him to live was Chriſt?* Doubtleſs ſuch as they never taſted, but were utter Strangers to, who did wholly mind

mind their own things. Truly, if you do not do what *Paul* did, if you do not live to Chriſt, you will loſe your Lives and your Souls too. You cannot reaſonably promiſe your ſelves that Chriſt will be your Saviour and Comforter, unleſs you direct all your Actions to the honour of God, Father, Son, and Spirit. Let your Souls therefore fly an higher pitch than Worldlings do, be you ſet for the ſerving and exalting of your Lord.

2. Make it your real and hearty deſire to go thorough with that work which your great Lord hath ſet you. It was the comfort of Chriſt himſelf, when he had been his Father's Servant in the great buſineſs of Man's Redemption, and was to return to him; and an argument which he uſed with him for the conferring upon him the promiſed and expected Reward, *Joh.* 17. 4. That he was able to ſay, *Father, I have glorified thee upon earth, I have finiſhed the work which thou gaveſt me to do.* He had ſo diligently plied it, that he had left none of it undone, but diſpatcht it all: Had he not finiſhed it, he could not have looked his Father in the Face: Had he not done it all, he had done nothing to purpoſe, we had been never the better, we had been ſtill in our Sins, and under the Curſe, and without Hope. But he finiſhed it, he did not leave any thing for us to do, in order to the compleating of his Mediation, but only to the qualifying of our ſelves for the participation of the bleſſed

bleſſed fruit and benefit thereof: He did all that the Law required, and he bare all that the Law inflicted, and he paid all that the Law demanded, even the utmoſt Farthing; and what he did, was done perfectly: He loved God with all his Heart, and all his Soul, and all his Mind, and all his Might, and he obeyed him to the full, there was nothing amiſs in his Obedience, nor wanting to it; all that he did was done ſo well, that it could not be better.

Now Chriſtians, do you imitate him, be ye Followers of him, mind all your buſineſs; whatever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might; and though you cannot do it all perfectly, yet have a cordial reſpect to it all, remembring that comfortable ſaying of holy *David*, *Pſal.* 119. 6. *Then I ſhall not be aſhamed, when I have reſpect to all thy commandments.* There are Three things that go to the making up of this Reſpect: The one is, an approving of them all in our Judgments, an eſteem of them all concerning all things to be right; another is, an embracing of them all in our Affections: *Oh, how love I thy law!* thy whole Law, every part and precept of it; and then a ſincere and earneſt endeavour to keep and perform them all. When though we cannot do all we would, yet we will do all that we can; there ſhall not be a voluntary wilful defect, neglect or tranſgreſſion; be as good, and gracious, and holy as you can, as obe-

dient

dient and exact as you can, walk as regularly and cloſely with God as you can; too too many content themſelves with doing their work by halves; they will pick and chuſe, this they like, and that they leave; and this ſpeaks them a company of half-Chriſtians, and unſound at the Heart, Perſons that are not fully brought over and compleatly bowed to God; they will be his, and be ruled by him, ſo far as they themſelves pleaſe, and no farther; whereas a ſincere Chriſtian makes a full reſignation of himſelf to God, both to his *preceptive* and *providential* Will. He is ſet for an entire Obedience to the former, and an humble chearful Submiſſion to the latter; ſuch an one will quarrel at nothing that God doth, and ſtick at nothing he commands, but deſire and labour to fill up his days and place with Duty; and when he is ſenſible of vacancies in his Life, he will bluſh, and ſigh, and weep over them; the thought and conſideration hereof, makes him walk humbly with his God, in the midſt of his higheſt Attainments, and beſt Services. And this is that which will be graciouſly Accepted, and for your everlaſting Honour, when the *Lord Jeſus* ſhall ſay of you as he ſaid of the Woman, who had once been a great Sinner, but was then a precious Saint, and had anointed his Feet, They have done what they could.

3. *Thirdly*,

3. *Thirdly*, carefully look to this, that whenever your Lord comes, either in Perſon or by Death, you be then found rightly employed, I mean ingaged in your proper buſineſs, that which hath been given you to do. A Maſter will not be pleaſed with his Servant though he finds him buſie about that which is of concernment to the Family, if ſo be he is doing at that time the work of another, with the neglect of his own: Look into thoſe two Verſes which immediately follow the Text, in which our Saviour thus ſpeaks: *Who is a faithful and wiſe Servant, whom his Lord hath made Ruler over his Houſhold, to give them meat in due ſeaſon? Bleſſed is that Servant, whom his Lord when he cometh ſhall find ſo doing.* Mark thoſe words, οὕτως ποιοῦντα, ſo doing; here muſt be a *ſo* fighting, and a *ſo* running, which reſpects the manner of the action; 1 *Cor.* 9. 24. *So run that ye may obtain:* And again, *Ver.* 26. *I therefore ſo run, not as uncertainly, ſo fight I not as one that beateth the Air.* Look to the manner of your Duties, that holy things be done holily, and good things well; and then there is a *ſo* doing which reſpects the matter of the Action, do ſo, *i. e.* ſo as you are bid, that which you are commanded. This our Lord himſelf curiouſly obſerved from firſt to laſt: *Wiſt ye not that I muſt be about my fathers buſineſs? I muſt work the works of him that ſent me:* That was an excellent Example, which it is our Intereſt and Wiſdom to follow.

O!

O! ſtudy to know, and wiſely conſider, every one of you, what is the work that He hath given you to do, and preſently girding up the Loins of your Mind apply to it, and conſtantly keep to it; do not divert and turn aſide to other things which you have nothing to do with; often think thus: O my Soul, what is the place unto which God hath called me? What the Relation, in which God hath ſet me? And what is the work of this place? What the Duty of this Relation? What the buſineſs of the day? And having found it out, do it, and ſo go on from day to day: There is a *preſent truth*, 2 Pet. 1. 12. in which we ought to be particularly eſtabliſhed, and for which we ſhould vigorouſly contend; and there is a *preſent duty*, which we ſhould engage to and be employed about, and that preſently; for a thing may be your Duty now, which will not be ſo to morrow. Some things are indeed our duties all our Dayes, but ſo is not every thing which perhaps is a duty now: Now it is your Wiſdom ſo to manage your ſelves, and to order all your Converſation, that you may never be found out of your place, nor out of your buſineſs; you know when the Prophets of *Baal* had been ſlain, and *Jezebel* hereby put into a rage, threatning to take away *Elijahs* life alſo, the good man moved with fear, went and lodged in a Cave: And 1 *Kings* 19. 9. *The word of the Lord came to him, and he ſaid unto him, What doſt thou here Elijah?* Now ſuppoſe ſuch a voice ſhould

ſound

ſound in your Ears; and that a voice from Heaven, the Voice of God: O Man, O Woman! what art thou doing here? What art thou about? How do you ſpend your Time? Look to it that you be able to ſay: Lord I am here in the place where thy wiſe Providence hath ſet me: I am walking in that way, which thy Word hath chalked out for me: I am here doing that work which thy own moſt Gracious Hand hath cut out for me to do: I am able to give a good Account of my ſelf, and way, and work. And my Friends, this I adviſe and beſeech you continually to attend: Mind this every day and every hour; to this purpoſe make frequent reflections upon your ſelves and actions; that whenſoever your Lord comes, he may not find you Idleing, nor wandering, nor ſinning; but ſerving your whole Generation according to his Will, and by this means you will be found of him in Peace, and to praiſe, and receive both your Commendation and Conſolation. Theſe are the things I heartily propound to your care and practice, in order to the making of your ſelves ready.

Now I ſhall in the cloſe of all, for the quickning and ſtrengthning of your holy endeavours to this bleſſed purpoſe, lay down a few things by way of motive and encouragement.

1. That time which you have afforded to you in this Life, is given for this end. It is an excellent thing for Men and Women to conſider the End, Why did God make me? why

why did he ſend me into the World? why did he give to me, and why doth he continue to me, Life, Being, Health, Strength, Parts and Abilities? for what is all this, but that I may bring him glory, and do my Soul good? that I might diſpatch the work which he hath given me to perform here? and that I may be fitted for the Joy and Happineſs which he hath prepared for his People hereafter? that I may ſerve him upon Earth to his acceptance? and that I may be taken up to the fruition of him in Heaven, to my full and everlaſting Satisfaction? The late learned and holy Dr. *Preſton* tells us, That the Original word in the Text, ἑτοιμος, *paratus*, ſignifieth *faſhioned*, when a Man is faſhioned as a Veſſel is. You, all of you, are now as a Veſſel upon the Wheel; and the time of this Life is the time of your Formation, that you may be made good for ſomething, that when you come to die, you may be found Veſſels of Honour, fit for your Maſter's Service and Uſe, fit for the great Houſe above.

Now my Brethren, how much time hath the great God, the Lord of Time, allowed unto you? Number the years that are paſt, how many have you run through, how long have you lived, and then think what you have been doing all this while; ſo long you have been, but what have you been? what have you done? and to what purpoſe? Some of you have been walking to and fro in the Earth,

twenty years, ſome thirty, ſome forty, and ſome of you a great many more; but what path have you choſen? what ſteps have you taken toward God and Heaven? what have you minded? what have you been employed about? how have you ſpent your time? This will be looked into, verily it will; ſuch Queſtions as theſe will be propounded, and it is your wiſdom to begin firſt, and thus to enquire and examin your ſelves afore-hand. Some of you have been very idle and lazy, and your day hath run out in ſleeping, and talking, and dreſſing, and eating and drinking, in frothy and fooliſh viſits, walking the Fields, and going to Stage-Plays; and you are like to come off with credit, are you not? Some of you have been very buſie, and have done a thouſand thouſand things; you have labour'd, and toyl'd, and ſweat; you have often and often tired your ſelves off your legs, and gone to bed with weary bones and aking heads. But what are theſe things that have thus ingroſs'd your time, and devoured your ſtrength? were they not little things, I mean, thoſe of this World? Obſerve what our Saviour ſaid, *Mat.* 23. 23. *Woe unto you Scribes and Phariſees, hypocrites, for ye pay tithe of mint, and aniſe, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; theſe ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* So there are the Affairs of this World, the Works of your Calling,

Calling, the Welfare of your Families, and things of like nature, theſe are to be minded; but then thoſe which referr to your God, your Souls and Eternity, are not to be neglected nor left undone. Therefore in all this time that God hath lent you, in which you have been careful and troubled about many things; what have you done about the main and principal thing? what have you done in order to a comfortable meeting with Chriſt? have you been making a wiſe and thorough preparation for your diſſolution and departure from hence? have you been dreſſing and putting on your garments of Praiſe? do you find your Souls in a good forwardneſs, in ſome capacity of looking your Lord in the Face with boldneſs? I cannot but tell you, if you have not made this your buſineſs, if you have not done a great deal toward it, much more, if you have been altogether negligent, and done nothing toward it, you have wretchedly loſt your time, and ſuffered your days to run out to waſte; you do in reality live to no purpoſe, ſo long as you do not live to God and Chriſt, and for Eternity: And how you will be able to anſwer at the laſt for this great and ſhameful neglect, it concerns you now to conſider.

2. All God's dealings with you, both in the higher way of Goſpel-goodneſs, and in the lower way of common Providence, are for the promoting and helping forward of this

great work. The Death of others, their unexpected and ſurprizing Deaths, call upon you to ſee that you live, and how you live. Your own natural weakneſſes and infirmities are for the ſtrengthning your care; thoſe pains and ſickneſſes that frequently aſſault you, and of which you do ſo much complain, are for your awakning, that finding theſe to be ſo grinding, you may do what you can to avoid thoſe that will be endleſs and inconceivably worſe. Theſe all are ſo many warnings that that God gives you in whoſe hand your time and Souls are. Theſe all are as ſo many Fore-runners of Chriſt, Harbingers of Death, and Monitors to you. Will you take notice of them, and learn wiſdom by them? if you do not, you your ſelves ſhall bear it, and dearly pay for it; for he that being often reproved, admoniſhed and warned, will not mind, nor mend, but hardens his neck, ſhall certainly, and perhaps ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and that without remedy, *Prov.* 29. 1.

Again, all the precious Ordinances which are plentifully vouchſafed, are alſo for this end, precious and proper means for the effecting of it; all the ſtrivings of God's holy Spirit, all the checks of your own Conſciences, all the inward motions and outward calls, all the counſels, perſwaſions and intreaties of Friends, all the uneaſineſs and Soul-trouble that you meet with, look this way, and tend hereunto. Why doth the Lord of the Harveſt

ſend

ſend among you ſo many of his Labourers, firſt one, and then another, with forcible Arguments, and yearning Bowels, and rolling Compaſſions, and winning perſwaſive Rhetorick? Why do they ſpend their time, and thoughts, and ſtrength upon and for you, but that you may be found Fruit-bearing Trees, and ſeaſonably tranſlated into the Celeſtial Paradiſe? Why, inſtead of ſummoning you to his Tribunal, and pronouncing immediately the dreadful Sentence of Condemnation, doth he entertain you with a joyful ſound of the precious and everlaſting Goſpel? Why doth he draw out upon you ſo long a line of Patience, Life and Tranquility, and wait to be Gracious? Why have you Precept upon Precept, and Line upon Line? Why Sabbath after Sabbath, and Sermon upon Sermon? What is the language of this Diſpenſation? do you interpret it, and conſider what it ſpeaks to you: Doth he not tell you, He is not willing you ſhould periſh, but come to repentance, believe and live, and making uſe of all theſe great and gracious helps, while you have them, to get ready for Chriſt and Glory?

Now, if there be no ſucceſs, but all the coſt that God is out upon you be loſt, and all the pains and labours which his Servants take with you be in vain, you are ſettled upon your Lees, you have loved Strangers, and after them you will go, as Perſons fixedly reſolved to continue in your ſins, and ſo devoted to a

ſtate of unregeneracy and filthineſs, that you will not exchange it for a better, you will be Impenitent ſtill, and you will be Unbelievers ſtill, and you will be Neglecters of Chriſt, and Haters of God, and Deſpiſers of Salvation ſtill: What do you think will become of you? and what will the end of theſe things be? what will you have to ſay for your ſelves, or how will you juſtifie ſuch a carriage and neglect? certainly you muſt needs be ſpeechleſs, Juſtice will have abundance to ſay why you ſhould be damned, and you not one word why you ſhould be pardoned. Nay, further, how will this aggravate your ſin, and harden the heart of God againſt you, and inflame his fury and indignation. I beſeech you to read, and conſider and tremble while you read, that dreadful paſſage of the Prophet, *Jer.* 6. 29. 30. *The bellows are burnt, the lead is conſumed in the fire, the founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away:* Such a choice, eminent, holy and painful Miniſter was ſent and placed among them, there he liv'd and labour'd, and dy'd; but their obſtinacy and ſin and wickedneſs out-liv'd their Miniſters; their Miniſters could not break the power of their Peoples luſts, but the Peoples incorrigibleneſs brake the hearts of their Miniſters, when they ſaw that all their ſtrength was ſpent for nought and in vain; a great deal of pains was taken, but no good was done, no profiting appear'd, no reformation wrought, no converſion; wicked they were,

were, and ſo they are; dead they were, and ſo they are; enemies they were to God, and Truth, and Godlineſs, and ſo they are. Well, this is ſad, but mark what followeth; *Reprobate Silver ſhall men call them, becauſe the Lord hath rejected them*; they are good for nothing, and they will never be good, there is no probability of working them into a better ſpirit and temper; know this, it will be far more tolerable for the blind Heathen, for them that never heard of a Mediator, never ſat under the light, tenders and invitation of the Goſpel, than it will be for you, and ſuch as you are; for *mitius punientur*, they ſhall be more eaſily puniſhed. *He that knoweth his maſters will, and doeth it not, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes*; and they ſhall be heavy as well as many. Oh, how grievouſly will the hand of revenging Juſtice lay on upon them! ſuch will not only be denied an entrance into Heaven, but alſo tumbled and thruſt down into the bottom of Hell; the hotteſt place in that burning Lake, where are the fierceſt and moſt furious Flames, ſhall be for their eternal Abode.

3. I commend to your moſt ſerious conſideration, your utter and total ignorance of the time of your own death, and of Chriſt's coming. This indeed we may be fully confident of, that both theſe will be, each of them in their proper ſeaſon, and the time of both is ſet and fixed by the eternal Decree of the immutable God. And there is no revoking nor

altering of the Divine Decrees. As for the Day of Chriſt's coming, that is ſet, *Act.* 17. 31. *He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained.* God hath not only reſolved upon the thing, Judgment, nor only choſen the Perſon that ſhall manage it, but alſo he hath appointed the Day; and ſo it is as to the day of Man's departure hence, *Job* 14. 5. *His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou haſt ſet him his bounds which he cannot paſs.* The days of our Life are determined by God, and God will not go from his own determination; the number of his Months are fixed, and ſo it ſhall ſtand; they ſhall be made neither more nor fewer, and the bounds too ſhall confine and hold him; there is no paſſing them, nor leaping over them. So then this is certain, that Chriſt will come, the ſacred Scripture aſſures us of that; and Death will come, the Worlds daily Experience is ſufficient Evidence of that; but when the one or the other will be, no Man can tell. Poſſibly thy death may be a great way off; and this thou fain wouldeſt have, who art wedded unto the World, and loveſt to live in ſenſual Pleaſures, and haſt no deſires after God: But for ought thou knoweſt, it may be near at hand, at the very Door, now drawing the Latch: Though there be not a Meſſenger ſent before-hand to tell thee of it, this very night thy Soul may be taken from thee;

thee; for many times God cuts the work ſhort in wrath, though always in righteouſneſs.

And this doth call loudly upon all of you, not only to prepare, but likewiſe to haſten your preparation. Do not put off; Death may come to night, therefore do not you deferr your great work till to morrow; it is better to ſit waiting when you are dreſs'd, than lazing and fooling before. Our *Saviour* in the Text bids you be ready; and ſince he names no time, your wiſdom will be to underſtand it of the preſent; be ready now, or make all the ſpeed you can, the ſooner the better, every way the better. For this very end it is that God is pleaſed to conceal the time: As I remember, *Suetonius* tells us, That *Julius Cæſar*, the firſt *Roman* Emperor, never acquainted his Soldiers before-hand with the ſet time of his Removes, or with the Attacques he would make upon his Enemies, that ſo he might have them always in a due poſture, fit to draw out and march when and whither he had a mind. So it is here, God's concealing is in order to the prevention of your ſleeping. Your great Lord, that would never have you ſecure, would have you always prepared. He that bids you watch, doth alſo bid you keep your Garments both ſafe and clean and tite about you; that Man needs fear nothing, who is prepared for every thing: He needs not be afraid of his Judge, who knows he ſhall come off well.

And therefore it is a very neceſſary and proper Queſtion, which you ſhould frequently, yea every day, propound to your ſelves; O my Soul, what caſe art thou in? how do matters ſtand between God and thee? art thou ready? ſuppoſe thou ſhouldeſt be ſummon'd and ſent for now, ſuppoſe grim Death ſhould now come with his pale Horſe, to carry thee from hence into the other World, what wouldeſt thou think of it? art thou ready to go? art thou fit to die? art thou willing to die? Oh, Heart, I know, if the Queſtion were propounded to many, the Anſwer muſt be this, What, fit to die? Ah, no, I am no ways fit, my peace with God is not made, my work is not done; I am no way fit to die, and therefore I can upon no terms be willing to die. I beſeech you therefore, now while it is called to day, fall to the work in good earneſt. You know that in many caſes Delays are dangerous: At the Pool of *Bethesda*, thoſe impotent Creatures that did not ſtep in firſt upon the Angel's troubling of the Waters, miſs'd of Healing: A Mariner by loſing his Wind, may loſe his Voyage; and if Delays are dangerous in any caſes, then in thoſe that do concern the Soul; and you do often and evidently ſee, that Death is quick in its motions, and therefore it would not be wiſdom in us to be ſlow and backward in our Preparations; no, no, let us be haſtning too, as 2 *Pet.* 3. 12. *What manner of perſons ought we to be in all holy converſation*

converſation and godlineſs, looking for, and haſting to the coming of the day of God. There is a Day of God coming, *i. e.* the Day of Judgment, the Day of the Worlds Diſſolution. Now, what is our duty? To be looking for it, *i. e.* with a look of Faith, believing that ſuch a Day will come; and a look of Complacency, with joy and delight; let it pleaſe you to think of it, as you read of thoſe that *love Chriſt's appearing*; and a look with Longing, Oh, when ſhall it be! O that the Salvation of *Iſrael* were come out of *Sion!* And there muſt be not only a looking for it, but a *haſting to it.* The words may be rendred two ways; either a haſting of the Day of God, or a haſting to it, *a haſting of its* coming: But you will ſay, That Day is ſet, how then can it be haſtned? I anſwer, As much as lyes in us, that is, in a way of holy deſire; as of old, the Prophet ſaid with reference to the firſt coming of Chriſt, *O, that thou wouldeſt rend the heavens and come down!* ſo now, O, that this day might come, and put an end to theſe days of abſence and diſtance, to theſe wretched days of ſin and trouble! Come Lord Jeſus, come quickly! make haſte my Beloved, and be thou like a Roe or young Hart upon the Mountains of Spices, *Cant.* 8. *ult.* all which was the Voice of the Spouſe, and will be of all thoſe that have a Spouſe-like Spirit. And then there muſt be *a haſting to the coming of that day*, and that is done in a way of Preparation;

ration: When the gracious Soul haſtens its work, the work of Believing, and of Redemption, and of Holineſs, drives on a-main; and with all activity in his courſe of duty, takes pains in Religion, and is at it night and day, preſſing on to this, that there may be a perfecting and making up that which is defective and lacking in Faith and Love, in all Grace and Duty. This, this, Chriſtians, is your great Work and Duty, and you will find, that a conſcientious diligent care to this excellent purpoſe, will be (as I have already ſaid) ſingularly cordial to you; when the work of Soul-preparation goeth off apace, your days will go off comfortably. None can know, but thoſe that experience, how ſweetly that Man may walk in the day, and how ſoundly he may ſleep in the night. What Roſes pave his Way, and what Delights ſtuff his Pillow, who is well aſſured of this, that let Death come at what time and in what manner God ſhall pleaſe to ſend it, it will do him a real kindneſs. And then let me add in the laſt place,

4. *Fourthly*, I would have you to ſtrengthen and encourage your ſelves in the Lord your God; and in order thereunto conſider this, that our dear Mediator, who is faithful in things pertaining to God, and alſo gracious in things pertaining to us, will deal tenderly with his poor Ones, accepting and being highly pleaſed with their unfeigned deſires, and

and hearty endeavours of getting themſelves into a readineſs for his coming, though they be not cleanſed according to the Purification of the Sanctuary. After all that we can do, there will be vacancies, but thoſe vacancies make room for Graces, and that will be ſure to fill them up. Alas! may a poor Chriſtian ſay, I find to my grief, and the wounding of my Spirit, when I have waſhed my ſelf with all diligence, and made my heart as clean as I can, there is a great deal of filthineſs remaining ſtill, and God may plunge me in the Ditch; and when I have put on my beautiful Garments, much nakedneſs will be appearing and diſcovering it ſelf ſtill. There is a great deal of iniquity mingling it ſelf with my moſt holy things; when I have taken the moſt pains before my duty and in it, I ſee cauſe to bluſh at it, and weep over it, and with trembling fear leſt God, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, ſhould ſpread upon my face the dung thereof. This is paſt a diſpute, that when I have done all that I can, I cannot do all that I ſhould; in many things I ſin, and in every thing I fall ſhort.

But as to this, know for your comfort, that the *Lord* whom you ſerve is gracious and very merciful, as good as you your ſelves can deſire; I am perſwaded you would not have him abate any of his Precepts, nor ſtrike out one of his Commandments; for they are all holy, and juſt, and good, and I can aſſure you he will bear

bear with your infirmities; and his Love ſhall cover a multitude of ſins: He loves indeed Perfection, and requires it, but he accepts Sincerity: He was pleaſed to ſay of his endeared Spouſe, *Cant.* 4. 7. *Thou art all fair, my love, there is no ſpot in thee:* Doubtleſs ſhe never looked her Face in the Glaſs, but ſhe ſaw many an one in her ſelf which ſhe would gladly have been rid of; but Chriſt graciouſly winked at them, and while ſhe was foul in her own eyes, ſhe was fair in his; and though he that is Omniſcient, of pure and piercing Eyes, could not but ſee ſome ſpots, yet he did impute none, he did not charge nor reproach her with them. The ſame it will be with thee, O thou poor, humbling and ſelf-judging Chriſtian, whatever thy nakedneſs is, and the ſhame of it as thou art in thy ſelf, *Chriſt* will cloath thee with the glorious and perfect Robe of his pure and compleat Righteouſneſs; and that being on, it will cover and hide it all, ſo that nothing ſhall be ſeen but what is lovely, what ſhall be to his delight and thine honour.

The wiſe Virgins had a ſpice of folly in them, as well as the fooliſh; for even they ſlumbered and ſlept; though they kept their Garments, and Lamps, and Oil, yet not their Watch. There is none here without their infirmities and imperfections; but yet the Bridegroom did not for this exclude them his preſence, no, he was pleaſed to count them ready,

ready, and ſo they went in to the Marriage. He did wink at their Nods. Sins heartily repented of, and Defects bewailed, ſhall be looked upon as if they had not been at all: They are indeed Debts, but croſs'd; and though they cannot but ſtand in God's Book, where memory doth let nothing ſlip, yet they ſhall never be called for. The *Lord*, in *Malachi* 16. 17. took particular notice of ſome who were very good, in a time that was very bad; and when the wicked ſharpned their Tongues, and their words were ſtout againſt him, *then theſe feared him, and ſpake often one to another*, *viz.* of and for him, for his Juſtification and in his Commendation, and for theſe there was a Book of Remembrance written, which ſpeaks God's fixed reſolution, never to forget them nor their love: And he would reward as well as remember them; *They ſhall be mine, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, in that day when I make up my jewels*; they had owned him, and now he would own them; he will never be behind hand with his People; *and*, ſaith he, *I will ſpare them*, though they be glittering Diamonds, precious Jewels, yet they have their flaws; though they be choice and eminent Saints, yet are they not without their ſins; notwithſtanding all their holineſs, and zeal, and courage for my Intereſt, and Name, and Glory, they need ſparing; as *Nehemiah* was very ſenſible; and therefore when he had, as in *Nehim.* 13. been reckoning up the good Services he had done,

done, in cleanſing the Chambers that belonged to the Houſe of God, and reforming the Abuſes that had been crept into the Offices of it, and keeping the Sabbath from an open and daring Profanation, he deſired, *ver.* 22. *That God would remember him concerning this*; but then he added, *and ſpare me according to the greatneſs of thy mercy*: Which plainly ſhews, he did not truſt in his own Merits, but in God's Mercy. Well, ſaith God, do they need Sparing-Mercy? I know they do, and they ſhall have it; I will ſpare them: But how much? He tells you, *As a father ſpareth his ſon that ſerves him*; whom he loves both for the ſake of his Relation, as he is his Son, and for the ſake of his Obedience, as he is a morigerous and dutiful Son. But will God ſpare his poor People ſo? Yes that he will, and infinitely more than ſo; for what are the bowels, the love and compaſſion of the moſt affectionate tender Father in the World, if compared with the bowels of our bleſſed God and Saviour? What are they? Not ſo much as a Drop to the Ocean.

Awake, awake then, yea and again I ſay awake! O all ye that profeſs your ſelves Chriſtians, and Candidates for Heaven, and the Glory thereof, ſleep not away your day in carnal ſecurity, and childiſh ſloathfulneſs; ſink not into diſcouragement, as if the difficulties were too hard to be conquered, and your Maſter too auſtere to be pleaſed. Do not

not do your buſineſs with a ſlack hand, and by halves, but apply forthwith to your Duty, and do it with all your might; waſh your ſelves as clean as ever you can from the filthineſs both of the Fleſh and of the Spirit, and prepare your ſelves as well as you can; though you are not able to do all you ſhould, yet do all you can; and though not *for* ſo doing, yet in *ſo* doing, you ſhall by your Lord be received graciouſly, and preſented before the Preſence of his Glory with exceeding joy; you ſhall leave all your ſins behind you, and all your defects and imperfections behind you, all buried in the grave of Chriſt, out of which not one of them ſhall have a reſurrection to your prejudice or diſgrace. At the day of his Appearance, and your Manifeſtation, there ſhall be nothing left that will be either an Offence to him, or a Shame to you; but as all ſorrow and ſighing ſhall once for ever flee away, ſo ſhall all ſhame and bluſhing. And as the Bridegroom rejoyceth over his Bride, ſo will your God rejoyce over you, and you again ſhall rejoyce in him, and the joy on both ſides ſhall be full.

WITH

WITH that Text I have done, and the good Lord accompany with a Bleſſing what is done, that thereby what hath been ſown in Weakneſs, may be raiſed in Power, to your preſent, future, and everlaſting Good. There is another Text which the Hand of Providence hath put into our hands, upon which I could very much inlarge; for it is a copious and fruitful Subject. But I very well underſtand there will be no need of my doing ſo. It would be no other than a vanity, to ſpend time and pains for the ſtrewing Flowers upon, and imbalming the Name of that worthy and faithful Servant of God, Mr. *John Oakes*, who for ſeveral years together ſerved his great Lord and Maſter Jeſus Chriſt, and the Intereſt of your Souls in this Congregation, ſince it is already very precious and ſweet to you, and me, and his reverend Brethren in the Miniſtry, yea, and all the Saints that knew him, among them his Memory is

and

and ſhall be bleſſed. He was of my Acquaintance between Thirty and Forty Years, and very pleaſant he was to me. A true and cordial Friend he was, firſt to his Maſter Chriſt, whom he loved, I dare ſay, in ſincerity, and ſerved with ſpirit and ſtrength, the beſt he had, for whom he couragiouſly appeared, and unto whom he immoveably cleav'd, and that in the worſt of times, notwithſtanding the many diſcouragements which crowded in and renewed themſelves upon him; and alſo a faithful Friend to his Friends, with whom he did converſe. A Perſon he was of a very chearful Spirit, not obſcured with thoſe clouds of Melancholy which render ſome very worthy and gracious Men an Affliction to themſelves, and unpleaſant unto others. He was alſo of a ſweet even Temper, not moroſs and chubbed, not fooliſhly ſtately and affecting the Pre-eminence, nor tranſported with the impetuous hurricanes of unreaſonable and unruly Paſſions, as too too many good Men are, who, in one ſenſe, know themſelves too well, and in another, forget themſelves too much. He

made it his buſineſs to ſtudy the Laws of his Relation, and to live by them, Husband, Father, Maſter, Paſtor, Brother, Friend.

It was your bleſſing and happineſs, that you did ſo long enjoy him; and it is my joy, that I was ſo far inſtrumental in bringing him among you; for he did not loiter, but diligently labour in the Vineyard, counting it all joy to ſpend and be ſpent for you. He Studied, that he might be fit to Preach, and he Preached with fervour, and zeal, and plainneſs, as one really ſet for the ſaving of himſelf and them that heard him: And let me add to his Commendation, which too many may read with a bluſhing reflection, He did teach by his Example, as well as by his Doctrine: He that was a Light in the Pulpit, was a Pattern out of it. Let none think he was a perfect Man, it is certain he was not, none are, not the beſt, while cloathed with Mortality. Perfection is the attainment and bleſſedneſs of the other World, and that too not till the Reſurrection of the Dead. But I cannot but ſay, he was

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an holy Man, and an uſeful Man, and one that God did own and bleſs, by giving him ſundry Seals of his Miniſtry, and making him a Spiritual Father to them; and he alſo gave in to him the hearts of his People, who rejoyced in his Light, and counted the Goſpel proviſion he brought them ſweet to their taſte.

But now you are in heavineſs, it is the grief of your very Hearts that you have loſt him, though indeed he is not loſt; for what Earth hath loſt, Heaven hath found: He is taken out of the Church Militant, and added to the Church Triumphant. Therefore I would not have his neareſt Relations, nor you his People, mourn as thoſe that have no hope, nor as thoſe who have but a faint and feeble hope. You may be confident of his being at reſt, entred into the Joy of his Lord, whom he faithfully ſerved here, and now fully enjoys above.

God was pleaſed to take him away ſuddenly, not giving him or you any warning by preceding Sickneſs; Death, when come to him, was in haſte, and

made quick diſpatch; it gave one blow, and down he fell. But who dare quarrel or find fault, where none is to be found? Our God hath Sovereign Right, and may do with his own as he will: It is not for him to ask Counſel of his Creatures, nor to give any Account of his Matters. He took him away from his Work while he was at it; and I am apt to think, if he had been put to his choice, he would have choſen to die ſo. It is counted noble, for a Souldier to die in the Field; but it is more noble, for a Miniſter to die in the Pulpit; and ſo to go from a Place of Service, to a Throne of Glory, from whence he ſhall never remove.

Your Complaints and Sighs, my dear Friends, ſo plentifully utter'd, and your Tears ſo abundantly poured out, do loudly ſpeak the high Eſteem you had of him while with you, and the deep ſenſe you have of your own Loſs now that he is by God taken from you. Now, I beſeech you, ſhew love to your ſelves, by obſerving thoſe Scripture-counſels he gave you, and following the holy Example

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he ſet you. Tread in his ſteps, who having with Faith and Patience paſs'd through the Duties and Difficulties of Time, is now taken up to the actual Poſſeſſion of the Promiſes, I mean, that Good, Happineſs and Glory which is contained in them, and inſured by them. And while you follow him, I exhort and earneſtly beſeech you to cleave to one another in love, maintaining the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. Keep your holy Communion unbroken; let not the Enemy of Saints and Churches ſet his Cloven-foot among you; avoid all unchriſtian and unbrotherly Diviſions, as exceeding indecent and miſchievous. And my Prayer is, That the Lord would ſanctifie to you the Providence which now ſmarts upon you, and is awakening; and, That he would make up the Loſs, which is great, and in his own due time ſend you another Paſtor after his own heart, that may feed you with ſound Knowledge and Doctrine, and happily build, with precious Materials, Gold and Silver, upon that Foundation which hath been moſt happily laid: And may this

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Flock of Chriſt be always under the care and conduct of ſuch Wiſe, Well-inſtructed, Faithful Under-Shepherds, as may give it Meat in due ſeaſon, and lead it into green Paſtures, and by the Waters of Stilneſs. *Amen, Amen.*

FINIS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE *Sermon Preached to* Young-men *the Twenty fifth of* December *laſt (at that which was Mr.* Oakes's *Meeting-place) by the Reverend Author of this Diſcourſe, will ſpeedily be publiſhed.*

There is now publiſhed a very uſeful Book, Entituled, The Joy of Faith; *Or a Treatiſe opening the true Nature of* Faith; *its loweſt Stature, and Diſtinction from Aſſurance; with a Preliminary Tract, evidencing the Divinity of the Sacred Scriptures. By* Samuel Lee, *M. A. Both to be ſold at the* Black Raven *in the* Poultrey.